



Voices of The forest

3rd Edition



CHICO 35 YEARS
MENDES
STANDOFF REVIVAL





Voices of The forest

ZEZÉ WEISS
ORGANIZATION



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MENDES
STANDOFF REVIVAL



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Organization

Xapuri Publishing

2024







GA
GRUPO DE TRABALHO
AMAZÔNICO







**"CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL OF YOU.
THAT'S RIGHT,
COMRADES,
TODAY THE STRUGGLE
IS FOR ALL OF US."**

CHICO MENDES

**REALIZATION
CHICO MENDES COMMITTEE**

**PARTNERSHIP
BANK OF BRAZIL FOUNDATION**



VOICES OF THE FOREST

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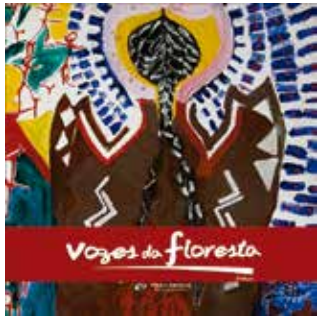
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Ailton Krenak

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Miranda Smith

21.704
Chico Mendes
Memory and Legacy

Rio Branco (AC)

Partnership celebrated on
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The Amazon issue is about defending the Peoples of the Forest. We consider the issue of the Amazon to be a serious problem, which today is no longer a matter of discourse, but of the practice we have to develop from now on. The Amazon is occupied. Everywhere there are Indians, people working, harvesting rubber and, at the same time, fighting for the conservation of nature. We want to promote a policy that guarantees the future of these workers, who have lived in the Amazon for centuries and made it productive at the same time. As long as there are Indians and rubber tappers in the Amazon jungle, there is hope of saving it. We hope that the people fighting in defense of the Amazon will be able to carry out work that really does bring hope. I believe that each and every one of us has a mission and a very important commitment to defending this region. This is not just a struggle for workers: it's a struggle for the whole of Brazilian society.

Chico Mendes

CHICO MENDES COMMITTEE

The Chico Mendes Committee was created on the same night of Chico Mendes' murder. When his comrades who were in Rio Branco heard the news, they went to the headquarters of the Diocese of Rio Branco. There, a group of activists from the most varied organizations that were springing up at the time, as a result of the end of the military regime as well as the political reorganization and the environmentalist movement, made a commitment to found the Committee, with the support of Dom Moacyr Grechi. At first, the Chico Mendes Committee had a very direct objective: to seek justice, so that the murderer and those who ordered the crime would be arrested, tried and sentenced. The annual Chico Mendes Week, held every December from the 15th to the 22nd, the respective dates of Chico Mendes' birth and murder, and more recently, for the last six years, the Youth of the Future Festival, maintain a very clear definition of the Chico Mendes Committee's field of action: support for forest workers in the fight against any kind of injustice and impunity; protection of the Amazon Rainforest and the peoples who live in it; unrestricted and continuous defense of the memory, legacy, dreams and ideals of Chico Mendes; engagement for the environmental, social and economic inclusion of forest peoples, families and communities in the processes and projects of socio-bioeconomics and climate justice; and, in a very special way, the inclusion of more and more women and young people in this journey of ours. Now, in these 35 years, with the support of the Banco do Brasil Foundation (FBB), and with our thanks to CNS, COIAB and GTA, who have contributed greatly to the realization of this and of the two previous editions, we have reissued our "Voices of the Forest", a beautiful record of our collective history, built by those who have fallen in the struggle and by those who remain steadfast in the journey, so that present and future generations can continue, with the banners of Chico Mendes, building their own history.

Angela Mendes





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THE DREAM THAT GROWS ON THE FOREST FLOOR



Thiago de Mello

You don't frequent anymore,
with a moved body,
the spaces of the world.
The measure of time doesn't reach you.
You've already gained the dimension of
the dream,
you are a beacon of hope.

Twenty years is just a sign
that memory serves us
to say that we love you,
brother of the springs.

You've arrived in the world,
with an already Acrean heart
– the starry forehead,
the flowing chest –
so that you could be fulfilled
building triumph
of what is greatness in man,
is indignant dew and lucid kindness.

You answered and answer loud calls:
the forest and its peoples
And let me tell you,
the general population of the world,
needed and need
constants of hope
with which you have sown and sow
the power of discovery
that love is possible.

The enemies of life,
afraid of the dawn,
ferociously reaped

your written path
by indelible letters.
Just because you had the gift of
dreaming,
as is appropriate and good,

With the hand of holy wrath
you write the sinister numbers
of the emerald hectares
devoured by the hideous blade
of gas, fire and ingratitude.
And then you cross us
the thickness of the ash
diverting the calls from unjust paths.

They couldn't even sense
that you are from the lineage of beings
meant to last
in the way of men.
Now unshakeable,
you don't need your body
to keep planting
and sharing seeds.

That's why I sing to you, brother.
You make us capable
(the sting of the beast hurts)
to take care of the ground and the sky
of this realm of clarity
our cradle and home,
that we live in and from.

You are with us.
You take us, we take you.
Behold, the life of man

is what he does and says,
writes and sings. You live:
you give foundation to what is to come.
Your own death
reaches deep into us
the bluest of chests
with a companionable shout,
who calls out to us,
it's the flame that calls us
to knead the clay,
prepare the pizarra
rigging of massaranduba wood,
itaúba, pau d'arco
and, patiently, build
the splendid cities.

We move along the paths
that you helped open
and so that we don't get lost,
careful of shortcuts,
you left the lamps
of perseverance
on the trunks of rubber trees,
in the sacopemas of kapok trees,
in the palms of the inajazeiras,
on the leaves of the imbaúbas
that keep the secret of the sun
and even in the brown favas
the acapurana girl
your partner in the stand-offs.
It has to be said that sometimes
the shadow of discouragement bites us
and we shudder with fury
from the shovels of opulence
that don't sleep and is full of eyes.

That's when the birds of the forest
come to us confidently
(the owls prolong
their farewells to the stars)
singing the happy syllables
of your boyish name.

In my corner comes the rumor
of fishermen's oars
the joy of the palm tree
embraced by the wind;
the band-of-wings parrot
of the boys of the várzea,
paunchy, skinny,
but who are already at school
(Sometimes they sleep hungry,
long live lemon balm).
I bring the maddened cry
of birds with burnt wings
by the embers of the inhuman;
the contented sweat of the
coconut, water flour makers,
of the açaí crushers.

And I end this thankful wave of hand
with the embrace of Amazonian children
who are yet to be born, blessed
through the majestic rainbow of love
that rises, moist with sap,
of the firm-lands of Alto Xapuri,
with the colors of all the
human races.

Thiago de Mello
Barreirinha, Amazonas
Spring 2008

CHICO MENDES HERO OF BRAZIL



Chico perhaps didn't even know what ecology meant, let alone ecological holocaust, when he began his pilgrimage through the forest to organize the rubber tappers. First, in the Rural Workers' Union and, later, to create the PT. On these journeys through the forest, he ended up uniting the ecological struggle, the trade union struggle and the party struggle under one banner, because he knew that they are inseparable – one feeds the other in the same cycle of life in the forest. And, an unimaginable feat at the time, in order to defend the same struggles, under the same banner, Chico led the union of indigenous people, river dwellers and rubber tappers in the great Peoples of the Forest Alliance. When I was in Xapuri, Acre, to help Chico's campaign for mayor in 1985, the situation was already difficult. The ranchers from the center-south of Brazil, who had invaded the region, made no secret of the fact that Chico Mendes was scheduled to die. Justly Chico, who was one of the most passionate defenders of life I have ever met, a man as pure and clean as the rainwater in the forest, his inseparable companion. It is in memory of all the comrades who, like Chico, died in defense of the land, the forest and life, that we continue to fight to implement the public policies dreamed up by Chico Mendes in Brazil. Public policies aimed at building a development model capable of generating wealth for the country and for the Peoples of the Forest and, at the same time, preserving our Amazon for present and future generations. In a little corner of heaven, Chico must be happy to know that, over the last 20 years, neither we nor his work stopped multiplying throughout Brazil. Today we have a better Amazon and a better Brazil. As a comrade, I celebrate the victories achieved by each and every one of us, starting with the Xapuri stand-offs. As a Brazilian, I celebrate Chico Mendes, hero of Brazil, for continuing to serve as a guide in our struggle for better days for all of us, especially for the Peoples of the Forest.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
President of the Republic
Brasília – Federal District
Spring 2008



*“AT FIRST, I THOUGHT I WAS FIGHTING TO SAVE THE RUBBER TREES,
THEN I THOUGHT I WAS FIGHTING TO SAVE THE AMAZON RAINFOREST.
NOW I REALIZE THAT I’M FIGHTING FOR HUMANITY.”*

CHICO MENDES

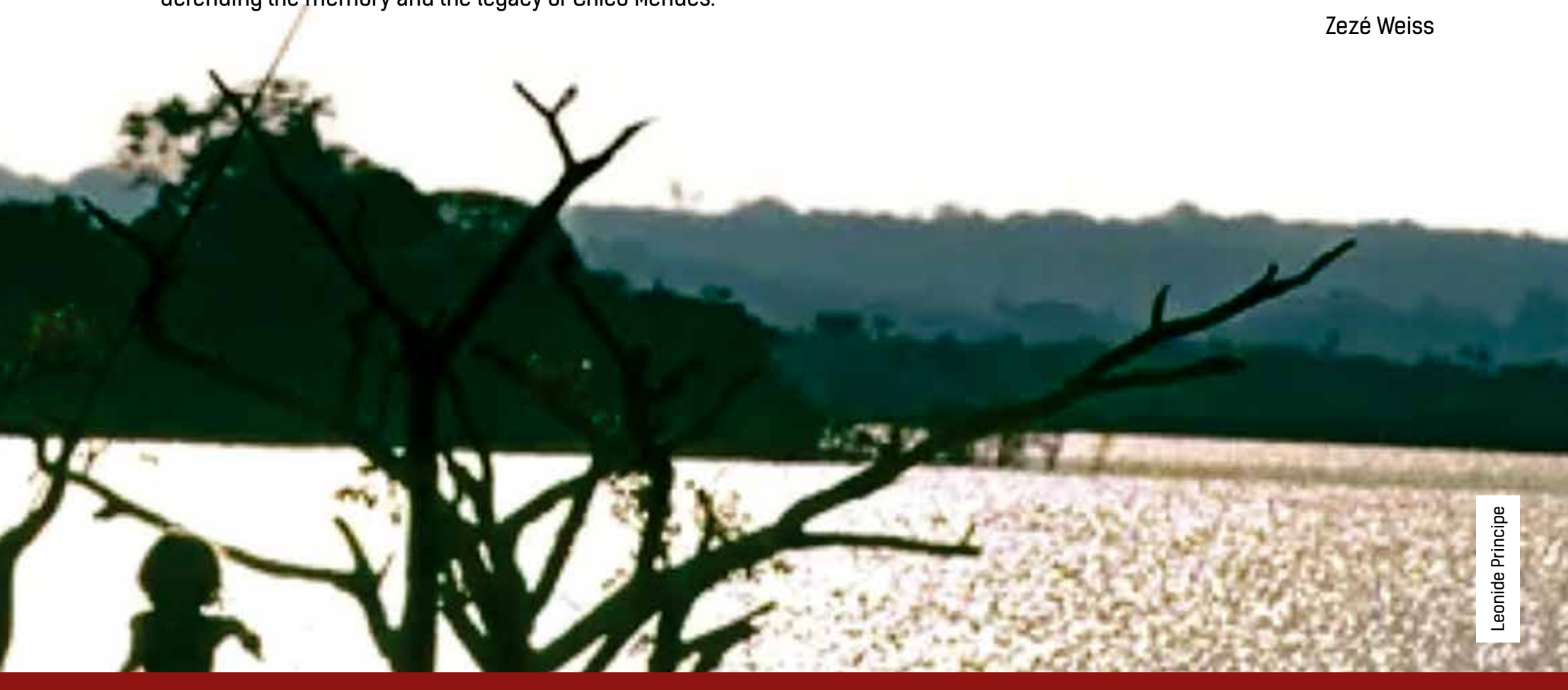
For Iêda Vilas-Boas
Ykamiaba of the Cerrado
essential partner in the production of Voices I and II
Enchanted April 4th, 2022



DEAR COMRADES

Organizing this book is an immense privilege, the greatest honor a militant could receive in her lifetime. In one fell swoop, I have won all the prizes: the heart of each deponent, the trust of each leader, the emotion of the story told in the voice and tone of the Peoples of the Forest themselves. We give tribute to Chico Mendes who, a comrade in the collective struggle, receives the tender telling of the many memories of the many people who built and are building, with him, this beautiful journey of struggle and resistance. A journey that is both simple and complex: of people, from the forest and beyond, of equals – without egos, without positions, without titles – where each of us, as in Chico Mendes’ dreams, are just his dear companions. From the lessons learned from Chico Mendes, I would like to express my deepest gratitude: to those who searched through drawers, dug through memories, sifted through documents, told stories, cried over nostalgia; to those who researched, scribbled down ideas, organized, scripted; to those who granted and conducted interviews; to those who transcribed endless hours of recordings. Gratitude to those who wrote, rewrote, improved texts, translated, revised, edited, revised again; to those who provided photos, documents, images, drawings, notes, art and poetry; to those who generously donated long hours of exhausting volunteer work. To those who mobilized leaders, took care of logistics, sought out and made partnerships a reality; to those who became partners; to those who worked sleepless nights to those who were patient; to those who left ahead of time; to those who offered a shoulder, a home and affection. All I can say is thank you to those who transformed information into beautiful pages and pages; to those who painted the most beautiful covers; to those who told their own story or the story of the Peoples of the Forest; to those who prefaced this book with the most beautiful poems; to those who made a beautiful presentation of this “Chico Mendes: Hero of Brazil”. And to those who, with the production of this third edition of *Voices of the Forest*, allow us to renew, once again, our unswerving collective commitment to defending the memory and the legacy of Chico Mendes.

Zezé Weiss



DREAMS

A warrior appeared with an arrow in his left hand, and the tip of the arrow was like a stalk of wheat when it's ripe. The warrior floated and danced. It was a circle of warriors dancing the ritual dance of the Krenak. He took me to a world of the future and placed me on a boat of light. "Don't be afraid, this is where you have your heritage. You will know where you came from and where you are going." It was the dream of tradition that gave me the path to follow. It gave me vitality and a sense of connection with my ancestors. We make important decisions when we dream. In the dream, we see the best way forward. If we can't dream, nothing happens. We wait to dream. Accompanying my father, who was losing his pride due to being in the city, I thought about what I was doing in this world. We were strange beings, with no ability whatsoever, wandering around the metropolis. I suffered thinking that the following generations would lose track of themselves and their origins. I thought about the need to find some way of recovering the memory of the connection with our ancestors. How to maintain the link between the ancestral land and the city? He needed to find a way to go back and find his ancestral land. The strong memory of cultural heritage was like a passion. It's in love that I can stand at the door of the ancestral world. When I had the awakening of being the heir to my culture, the decision came to me to work with reverence and humility towards our tradition. However, when I was working hard, I realized my limitations and how small I was working alone. It was then that I dreamt. I began to receive teachings from dreams, as is the custom of our tradition. Not everyone has access to the language of dreams. Just as there are people who easily master the language of musical instruments, there are those who try hard and don't master it. In the same way, there are those who have a vocation for the world of dreams. And those who have a vocation, by accumulating training and experience, will be able to understand this language. For example, among the Xavante, there is the "dreamer", who specializes in dreaming. He lives a life of abstinence and spiritual training to develop this ability. To do this, he has a place of study, like a university. When



Ailton Krenak

the village is faced with the need to know its future, the Xavante turn to this "dreamer". They then wait for days until he dreams. As soon as they hear the dream, they make their decision. When I told my dream to the dreamer elder Sibupá, of the Xavante people, he kept asking me about the details. Was the river full or empty? Which bird appeared? This is how he teaches me about the meaning of the dream. If I dreamt of an owl, that has its own meaning. Alligator has another meaning. Animals act as messengers and can represent certain situations. Just as you can study from books, we can learn from dreams. Knowing what my dream means allows me to decide which path to follow. Sibupá also told a dream. In the dream, he was traveling around the world. He saw forests cut down, animals dying and many diseases. The world was deplorable. He continued traveling and, up ahead, a very old ancestral old man appeared and said

to him: "I am very sad that the forest is dying out, the world is getting sick, and you are allowing it. You need to revive nature. Start acting for the survival of the forest. If the forest stays healthy, you'll be happy. You are very hard-working. But from now on you need to change the direction of your activities, recover the destroyed forest, create land where children can grow up in the midst of their traditional cultures." Sibupá's dream inspired the creation of the Indigenous Research Center and changed the course of my activities. It was in the 1970s that the Brazilian government began major exploitative projects throughout the territory. Indigenous people from various places began to react. I went looking for and meeting leaders and shamans, talking to rubber tappers and forest peoples, from whom we learned a lot. In 1979, we decided to found UNI (Union of Indigenous Nations). Our initial aim was to guarantee legal ownership of the land to prevent any encroachment by whites and to create a network of various indigenous nations. We wanted to get out of dependence on FUNAI, promote education and health in the villages with the hands of the indigenous themselves, form a center for studies and research on indigenous nations, a congress of indigenous representation, create our laws and obtain autonomy. UNI's activity was a succession of difficulties and barriers. It was a non-legalized society, with no telephone and only a small secret office in a room lent by the Church. UNI members started sending messages to everyone explaining our objectives, which resulted in support from many places. We even received donations from inmates in South Dakota, USA; German children organized a rock concert to raise funds, which they sent to us; significant donations also came from Norway and Canada. We faced a lot of danger and violence. We suffered several kidnapping threats. In Paraná, Angelo Kretã, a local peasant leader, was brutally murdered by loggers. In Mato Grosso do Sul, Marçal de Souza, vice-president of UNI, was murdered. These were leaders who were sowing the seeds of UNI's dreams in favor of local peoples. However, they didn't manage to murder us all. We survived, we

managed to make UNI grow and we were able to create a bond of solidarity with the various isolated nations in various corners of Brazil. We are trying to legalize land ownership. But are we prepared to defend them? Will we be able to pass on the heritage we are receiving to future generations? In order to defend the culture and continue passing it on to young people, we need to start with the seed, plant it and create strong roots. When we created the Indigenous Research Centre (CPI) in 1989, we had already articulated the mobilization around the paradigm shift of the 1988 Constitution. That's how we avoided becoming a nation of assimilated mestizos. That act was just the beginning. Now, the most important thing is to defend the Land and know how to leave it to our children. When the Indians lose their culture, they will become like the whites. If it weren't for my ancestors, I'd be drunk and wanting to be a politician like them.



Ailton Krenak

For the indigenous peoples, most of whom come from hunting and gathering cultures, the forest is their livelihood, the sacred place where they learn the wisdom of life. The government takes their land away from the Indians and invites loggers, cattle ranchers, miners, squatters, in short, the various exploiters who build roads, hydroelectric dams and huge mining operations. Exploitation destroys the basis of life for the Indians, who, with nowhere else to go, are swallowed up by white society at its lowest and most impoverished level. By exception, there are Indians who manage to study and become lawyers, even federal congressmen. But in general, there is a clear language and cultural barrier, as well as strong prejudice. A Krikati woman who married a white man from the city, when she returned to the village, confessed: "When I go back to the village, I feel at peace. Because there, in the city, I feel constantly stressed, people don't help each other. Here in the village, I don't even have to lock my house, I can talk to everyone in a friendly way." On the other hand, the more young people participate in the globalizing education brought in by the government, the more they distance themselves from their traditions and cultures. The indigenous culture of coexistence with the forest contrasts with the urban culture of exploitation and development. The CPI was an advanced stage of the UNI, with the aim of creating harmony between technology and nature, introducing techniques that make sense to indigenous life. We idealize living in a beautiful place and introducing only techniques that are useful to this life. Even for people who live in the city, if they know how to balance utility with nature, maybe life can be better. Just as rivers fill or empty according to the rainy season, we need to learn to respect the rhythm of nature, to learn that there is a time of abundance and a time of scarcity. The word citizenship is well known: it is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in various constitutions. It's part of this, shall we say, white repertoire. The word "florestania [forest citizenship]", on the other hand, was born in a regional context, at a very active moment in the social struggle of the people who

live in the forest. When Chico Mendes, rubber tappers and indigenous people began to get together, they realized that what they were aiming for was not to be confused with citizenship – it would be a new field for claiming rights (after all, these are not a pre-existing thing, they are born out of a community's willingness to anticipate the understanding that something should be considered a right, but isn't yet). At the end of the 1970s, before the dictatorship, the Brazilian government wanted to fragment the large tracts of forest to the south of Amazonas and in Acre, close to the borders with Bolivia and Peru. The classic way of doing this was to open roads and bring in settlers, but in an attempt to privatize that area in a discreet and efficient way, inspired by Jarbas Passarinho and his gang, the Incra people went out offering plots to those who were already there. However, when they arrived to build the colonization lines, those who had sided with Chico Mendes stood up, because they were in florestania mode and, like Gandhi and his followers, organized a peaceful resistance to the actions of the State. Women, children, men, people of all ages stood between the trees and the chainsaws, fencing off the paths of those who arrived to make demarcations and preventing the urban finger – be it geographers, topographers or seismographers – from pointing ends into the forest. They didn't want stakes or plots, they wanted the fluidity of the rivers, the continuity of the forest. The indigenous people lived in collective reserves, and the rubber tappers, who were mostly northeasterners who migrated to the Amazon rainforest at the end of the 19th century, realized this difference. After four, five, six generations in the forest, what they wanted was to live like indigenous people. There was a positive contagion of thought, of culture, a reflection on community, in which the rubber tappers created extractivist reserves and equated the status of these direct-use conservation units with that of indigenous lands. But we know that there is no such thing as collective property in Brazil: even the lands on which indigenous people live belong to the State. The cancer of capitalism only allows private property and is incompatible with

any other perspective of collective land use. In our desire to create florestania, we didn't even want to have a CPF [identification number], but the establishment of a new right presupposes the movement of an enormous apparatus of registers, documents, certifications, notaries... What drove the meeting of these peoples was the understanding that there were bosses among them: landowners who claimed ownership of vast areas of forest, the rubber plantations, where both indigenous and non-indigenous people were subjected to slave labor. A constellation of peoples like the Kaxinawa, the Ashaninka, the Huni Kuim and many others lived oppressed by this situation favored by capital, in which a boss, who wasn't even present (he could have been in São Paulo, London, anywhere in the world), exploited the Amazon rainforest – and its people – by remote control. By rising up to eliminate the boss figure, we were able to join together. The Peoples of the Forest Alliance was born out of the search for equality in this political experience.

Ailton Krenak



Câmara dos Deputados

A WISE RUBBER TAPPER

Francisco Alves Mendes Filho, or Chico Mendes, was a man of the forest par excellence. Simple, poor, full of tenderness and with a clean soul. At the age of 5, he accompanied his father, also Francisco, on long walks through the dense forest. At 9, he was “cutting” rubber and producing rubber like a big man. At 44, he was already a wise rubber tapper, a translator of mysteries and myths. Imagine a boy walking through the forest among vines, tabocas, gigantic trees, thorns and smells, lots of smells and colors, and reptiles and uncoded noises? It could only be a

fascinating experience. A mixture of curiosity and fear, like the snoring of the guariba monkeys in the closed canopies high up. This is how he formed his imagination, his courage and his wonder. And, without ever having left those bowels, he became a man, unique in the way he walked, dressed, spoke... to end up planting ideas of sustainability in Acre, Brazil and, in a way, the world. He ended up going against the interests of those who prioritize ambition and plunder. On December 22, 1988, he was killed in the backyard of his home, in the small, historic town of



Miranda Smith



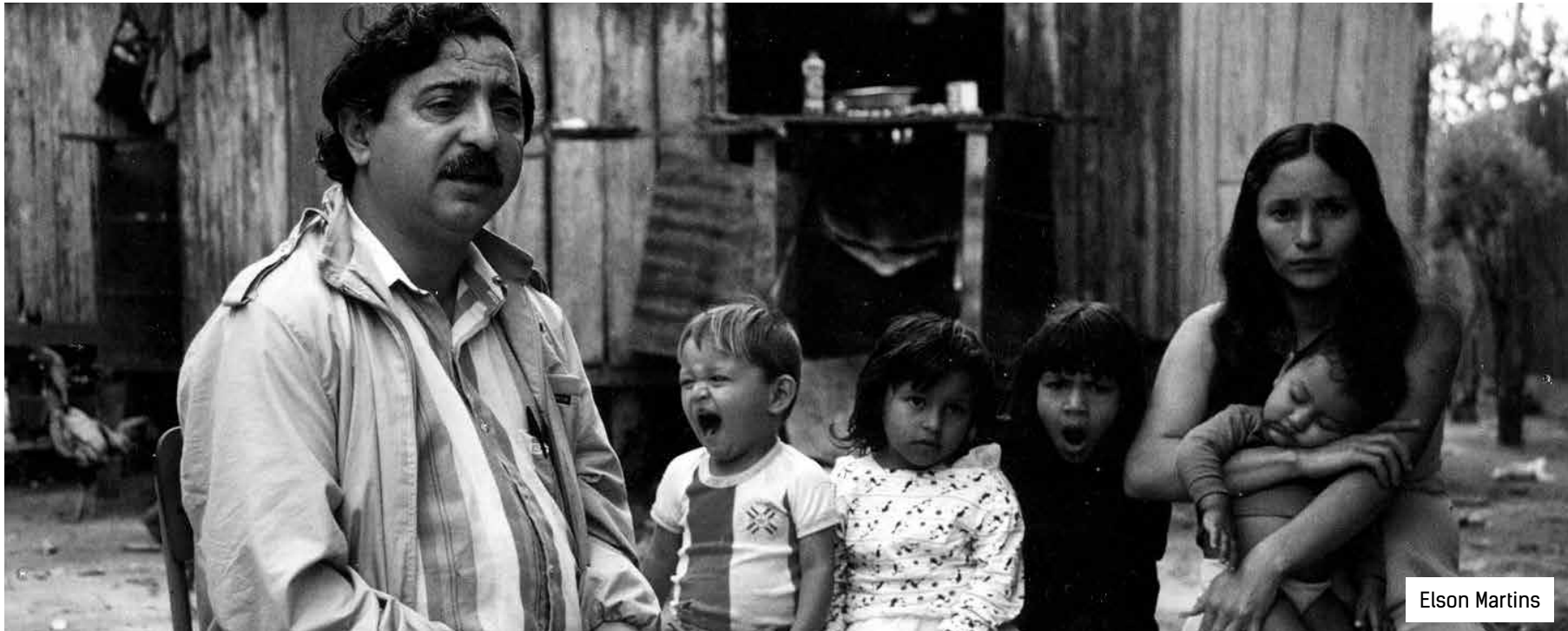
Xapuri, by the pawn Darcy Alves, son of the farmer Darli Alves, with a 12-gauge shotgun to his chest and lumps of lead over his heart. 35 years have passed since his death shook and impoverished the world. He would have turned 80 on December 15, 2024. In 1995, at the request of the magazine *N'ativa*, published by the Garibaldi Brasil Foundation of Rio Branco City Hall, I wrote the article "Many Chico Mendes" with the intention of showing that Acre is different because it has countless Chicos among the Peoples of the Forest: "Many remain invisible: They have been entrenched in the forests of the Amazon since 1877, the year of the terrible drought that drove them here from the Northeast. To get to know them, you have to become entrenched too. The rubber tappers of Acre and their fellows receive their visitors with quiet satisfaction. No kisses or hugs, no idle words or vacant glances. It's about arriving and reading the love in the shy gestures and the almost embarrassment of showing oneself. The Chicos are brothers and accomplices of nature and express the simplest human desire to know and relate to others. They know a lot. And they want to teach and share what they know, as if they had mastered the secret of life in its best and greatest dimension. Their house has no door. You enter, eat and sleep sharing the intimacy they expose, unarmed. And no one comes out of this relationship immune; they become human and complete. There's no way not to imitate them if we want to survive the hecatomb of a civilization model that has subjected man to lovelessness." Until the middle of the 19th century, on old maps, Acre was called "undiscovered lands", but occupied by indigenous people, animals and solitary adventurers. These were Bolivian and Peruvian lands resulting from the division between the empires of Spain and Portugal. According to the writer from Pará, Abguar Bastos, it was those from Northeastener-Acreanos who, after the battle for rubber in the second half of that century, were able to say to the world: "Behold, we have given this solitude a destiny!" About this intrepid migrant from the Brazilian Northeast, Bastos said in a beautiful introduction to Craveiro

Costa's book "A Conquista do Deserto Ocidental" (The Conquest of the Western Desert), that he "came on the spur of the moment, like a cloud of locusts, and walked forward, unkempt, bearded, hairy, hurried and cursing. The northeasterner and Acre were two destinations that still had no connection with life: the first in search of a land that would welcome him, the second in search of a people who would take it. One loaded with children. The other laden with rivers". The harsh new world that awaited the northeasterners, although unknown on the inside, was designed on the outside by international capital. It had been divided into rubber plantations to produce rubber for Victorian Europe. Each rubber plantation had its "margin", next to a river, where the headquarters of the capitalist unit was located; and the "center", in the heart of the forest, where the rubber plantations were located near the Indians and in the middle of the animals. On the "bank", accessed by the river, was the rubber boss's house, the aggregates' shacks and the warehouse. From there, products such as kerosene, salt, jerky, canned meat, flour, beans, matches, cartridges, gunpowder and lead, among others, were shipped in donkey trains to the "center". There were also bottles of cachaça, Capivarol syrup, Glostora glitter and other superfluous items charged at the price of gold. On the way back, the train brought the rubber, the price of which, assessed in the shack – with the breakdown in weight and errors on the scales, or in the clerk's notes on the blotter – enslaved the rubber tapper by the unpayable debt. Between the man who owned property on the "margin" and the exploited man in the "center", the difference, according to Abguar Bastos, was: "One sweated in meditation, the other in blood. One owed money, the other his life. One fell and got up, the other fell and crawled. One could have money, the other owed obligations. One suffered complaining and demanding, the other suffered thanking and humiliating himself." At this time of social and human inequalities, international capital prospered from Amazonian extractivism. In fact, with just one species of Amazonian biodiversity: the *Hevea brasiliensis*. And it soon

discovered how to prosper more quickly by planting the species in Malaysia. By 1908, Asian production, aided by science and technology, had already surpassed Brazilian production. In the first decade of the 20th century, Acre and its rubber plantations began to wither away: the “margins” emptied, and relations between rubber tappers and rubber barons changed. Everyone is left destitute. The agony lasted until the Second World War (1939–1945), when the United States and Europe ran out of the latex controlled by the Asians, Hitler’s partners. The Americans decided to reactivate the Amazonian rubber plantations and Brazil created the figure of the Rubber Soldier. A new wave of northeasterners is pushed into the region with promises and dreams that will not be realized. Within five years, the war was over and, once again, capital left, leaving a trail of regrets. What sprouted was an invisible society which, in the 1970s, emerged in revolt, bringing together rubber tappers, river dwellers, Indians and squatters, henceforth known as the Peoples of the Forest. Since its discovery by so-called civilized researchers and adventurers in the 16th century, the Amazon has suffered from the plundering of its natural wealth and the stupid aggression against what is most sacred: its tradition, its culture, its People of the Forest and its waters. Located in the southwest of the Amazon, with an area of 16.4 million hectares, Acre is a child of this misfortune. Its history begins with the first rubber cycle (1890 to 1912), during which it had to face a war with Bolivia (1902) to become Brazilian. In fact, he had to lead four insurrections: first the Ceará journalist José Carvalho, a clerk and justice of the peace in Boca do Acre, gathered a group of rubber tappers and expelled the Bolivian military who were staying in Puerto Alonso, now Porto Acre; then came the Spanish adventurer Luis Gálvez Rodríguez de Arias, who created the Independent Republic of Acre, rejected by the Brazilian government; then came a group of poets from Amazonas who didn’t know how to fire a cannon and lost the territory to the Bolivian army; finally, the military man from Rio Grande do Sul, Plácido de Castro, brought the war to a

diplomatic conclusion in 1903. The thousands of workers who migrated from the drought-stricken Northeast to the Amazon flood made Acre a major rubber producer and a state that reached the third millennium as an ecological benchmark. Not before facing the most perverse historical blow: the 1964 Military Dictatorship, which lasted 21 years and, in the 1970s, wanted to turn the forest into pasture for cattle. Acre was suddenly invaded by migrants from the South, Southeast and Center-West, who received funding and tax incentives with which they illicitly bought around 5 million hectares of rubber plantations with rubber tapping families inside. Around 40,000 socially disorganized people were expelled to urban centres and Bolivia, until they decided to organize “empates” [standoffs]. Thus were born the Extractivist Reserves and Settlements, the Workers’ Party, the National Council of Rubber Tappers, the Peoples of the Forest Union, the Peoples of the Forest Alliance and the Government of the Forest, with the concept (better to say feeling) of Acreanity and Florestania [Forest citizenship]. Two icons of this movement – Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes – were murdered by their attackers. But their legacy remained, fueling actions in favor of a fairer Acre. The state has managed to save its extractivist and environmentalist tradition, but it is also “experimentalist”, trying to reconcile economic, environmental, social and political interests. Chico Mendes was born in the Porto Rico rubber plantation, in Xapuri (AC), on December 15, 1944. His parents lived in the Bom Futuro rubber plantation, a production unit that occupies an average of 300 hectares of dense forest with three rubber “roads” (a path that accesses 150 latex-producing trees). In the shape of a petal, the “road” starts and ends at the same point: the rubber tapper’s house in a small clearing in the forest. The allotments are connected to the rubber plantation headquarters by a wider path, the varadouro, used by donkey trains that bring goods (aviamento) to the rubber tapper and collect the rubber produced. In 1955, the family moved to the Equador rubber plantation, located in Pote Seco, near the





Cachoeira rubber plantation, still in Xapuri. There, at the age of 19, Chico met Euclides Fernandes Távora, the person who taught him to read and think about social injustices. Euclides was a lieutenant in the Brazilian Army who had taken part in the Communist Intent organized by Luiz Carlos Prestes in 1935. With the defeat of Prestes, he was arrested along with other participants on the island of Fernando Noronha, from where he escaped with the help of the influential military officer Juarez Távora, his uncle, one of the generals of the 1964 dictatorship. After escaping, he lived in Pará, then went into exile in Bolivia, where he took part in armed uprisings with Bolivian miners. Fearing that he would be arrested again, he crossed the border into Acre. In 1961, he visited Chico Mendes' father's farm, a three-hour walk from his own, and became interested in the life of the young rubber tapper. Chico started visiting him on weekends to listen to the battery-powered radio and read old newspapers with his new friend, who taught him how the exploitation of man by man took place on the rubber plantations of Acre. In 1965 Euclides fell ill, traveled in search of treatment and Chico never saw him again. A decade later, Acre was in turmoil, causing a complete upheaval of the rubber plantations, with the illiterate and helpless rubber tappers being pressured to abandon their jobs and become hunger statistics on the urban outskirts. The families lived in terror. They received visits from foremen, thugs, lawyers and police officers (civilian and military), who showed them false documents about the purchase of the rubber plantations and set deadlines for them to leave the land. At the same time, they burned down shacks, destroyed gardens and closed forest paths by cutting down trees. The police arrested rubber tappers and squatters and tortured them in police stations. In some cases, they forced them to sign agreements with the ranchers, with a gun pointed at their head. Distressed, Chico Mendes went around the rubber plantations trying to organize a resistance. In 1975, he learned that a commission from Contag (the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers) was promoting a course for union leaders in Brasília, on the border with Bolivia, and he went there. He took the course and took part in the creation of the Workers' Union in the town. On December 21, when the Brasília union was founded, he was so euphoric that he aroused the suspicions of the Contag delegate, João Maia da Silva Filho, who thought he was a scout for the cattle ranchers. The suspicion was

unfounded. Chico attracted attention because he helped the majority of people who couldn't write to fill in the membership form. Chico was eventually elected secretary-general, making up the board with Elias Rosendo and Wilson Pinheiro. For him, the priority, as Euclides taught him, was to teach literacy and raise awareness among rubber tappers and squatters so that they could fight against exploitation and expulsion from their lands. And Contag became a great ally by making a good lawyer available to the class, Pedro Marques da Cunha Neto, from Ceará, who presented the Land Statute and the Civil Code as legal instruments for defending the rights of rural workers. This was something new for those who had never been recognized as a functional category in Brazilian legislation. Chico's father, Francisco Mendes, had a leg defect, which made it difficult for him to walk. He was a bad-tempered man, but he was intelligent and challenged the rules of the rubber plantation. He could read and write. His mother, Iraci Mendes, of Portuguese-Guyanese origin, was tall, beautiful, kind and generous. Chico inherited traits from both of them: intelligence, courage and simplicity. He married twice: first, in 1969, to Eunice Feitosa de Meneses, on the Cachoeira rubber plantation, with whom he had two daughters: Angela Maria and another, who died early. The couple separated in 1971, at which time Chico began his wanderings, spreading lessons of resistance. During his wanderings he met Ilzamar again, whom he had known as a girl and who had become a beautiful young woman from the Santa Fé rubber plantation, who became the mother of Elenira and Sandino, and in whose arms he died in 1988. The family, despite the union bosses who kept him away, was his great passion. In a photo with Ilzamar and the children, he let this feeling shine through. "Why can't we be happy together?" - he wrote on the back, laconic. Chico's mother was pregnant 19 times and died in childbirth at the age of 42. Chico would have had 18 siblings if most of them had made it. But there were only 6 left, 4 men and 2 women - and he was the second oldest. The same year his mother died, Chico lost



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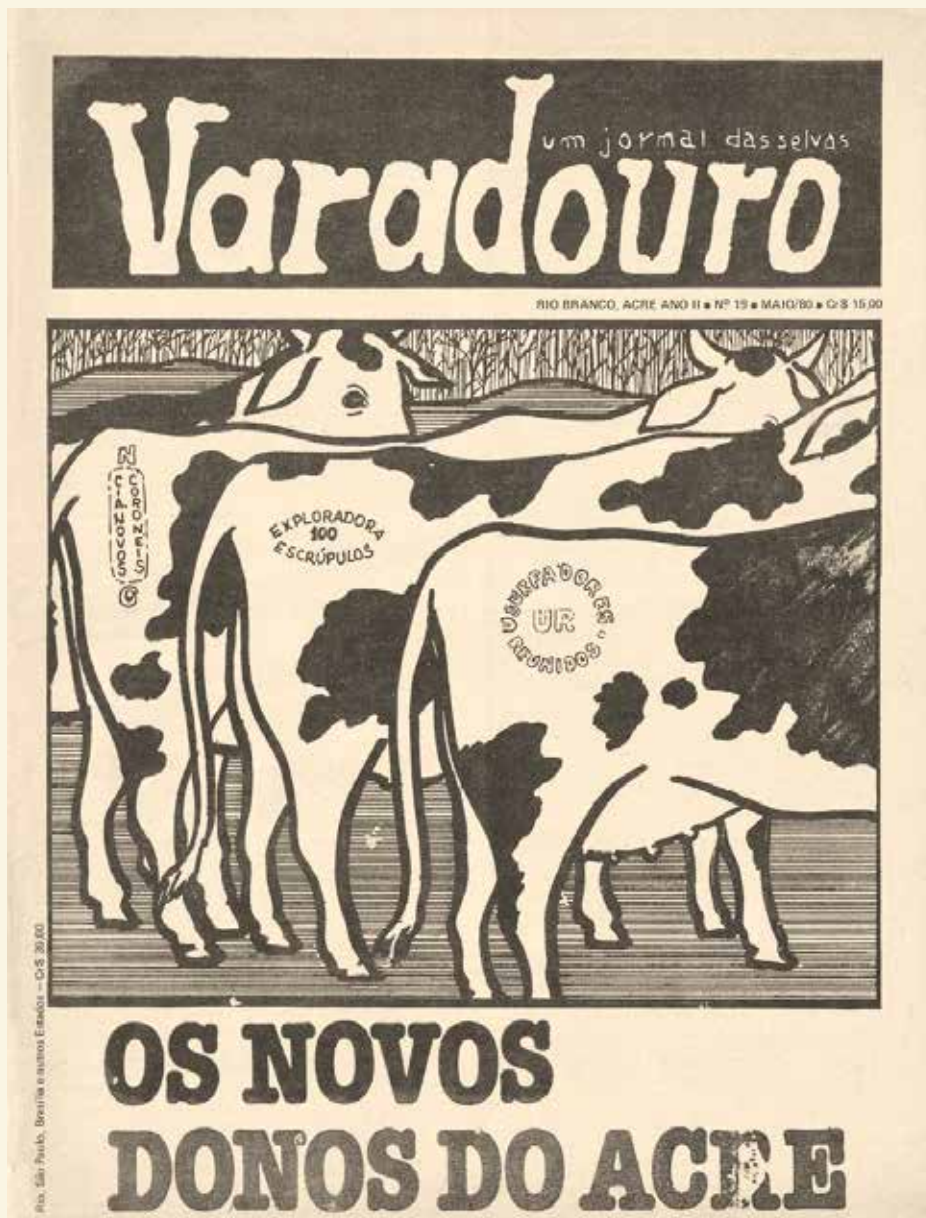
one of his sisters and his brother Raimundo. He took care of the five youngest children while his father, tired and ill, worked only on subsistence farming. Today, his relatives and friends have a safe home on the Cachoeira rubber plantation, which has been expropriated and occupied by extractivists who practice community management and concepts of sustainability. The project is a model of community management in Acre and the Amazon. In March 2007, I met José Alves Mendes, or Zuza, Chico's younger brother, in Brasília, with whom I had a long conversation about his family's life. I wanted to know what the young Chico was like before he became the great leader he became. Zuza had become his comrade-in-arms and, like him, he was always threatened with death. Zuza spoke with emotion about the family marked by tragedy. He said that Chico, at the age of 16, became "father and mother" to a small group of younger siblings. Tragedy plagued the family. Francisco's father, crippled in one leg, got worse when he cut a thin vine with a sharp club, which almost severed the knee of his healthy leg. Since then, he has stopped working with rubber tapping. Raimundo, who at 14 was his mother's darling and his father's helper, really wanted to be a rubber tapper. He insisted so much that his father asked Chico to open a "road" for him. The day before he was due to start work, however, his father gave him another task: to kill a pig in order to remove the lard used as cooking oil, then take food to the group of rubber tappers who, together with Chico Mendes, were camped in the forest clearing other "roads". At the time, Zuza was seven years old and was attached to Raimundo. The two agreed to leave for the first "cut" at dawn, hiding from their father, in time to return by mid-morning, before the pig was killed. So they left the shack at dawn, sneaking into the woods. Raimundo dressed in character: shorts, rubber tapper shoes, a machete around his waist, a poronga [candle headlight] on his head and a loaded 12-gauge shotgun slung over his shoulder. Up ahead, in a clearing known as Taquara, the two found a huge log lying on the path. Raimundo had to raise his rifle to give little Zuza his hand. With the lack of light and the excitement of becoming a rubber tapper, he let the gun slip over the log. The gun went off and hit him in the head. "It was horrible!" – recalls Zuza, who was startled by the sudden gunshot, the smoke and Raimundo's body falling on top of him. When he tried to get out from under his brother, he

felt his head and found nothing but brains and blood. He ran screaming through the forest in the dark and luckily came across Chico Mendes, who was also desperate. His mother couldn't bear this pain, he thought. She couldn't. When she received her dead son, she knelt down in the yard of the house, looked up at the sky and pleaded: "If there is a spirit, a God, I beg you to take me with my son. I don't want to live anymore." From then on, she died a little every day. She said goodbye to one person and another, gave advice... prevented the usual midwife from being called in to look after her and wouldn't let her cut the piece of murim cloth to make diapers for her unborn child. "It'll ruin the farm!" Chico cried when he saw his mother choosing death. He wanted to take her to the city, in a hammock (there was no road), for medical care... His mother begged him: "Son, don't go away from me. I need to give you some advice before you leave." The father, standing against the bedroom wall, also cried about this and other pains, and resignedly said: "Your mother is really going to die, Chico". Chico still tried to seek help, but his mother told him: "Chico, calm down. You'll have to be father and mother to your little brothers and sisters. Don't let them go hungry!" Upset, he went crying in search of help. When he returned, Mrs. Iraci had already died. He saw her inert, with her white complexion, her blonde, curly hair, without the sweet, advisory voice that repeated, repeated... She was the image of a rubber tapper's mother who, in an unexpected situation, pairs fragility and strength, tenderness and coldness, darkness and light. Thus, from pain to pain, Chico learned to read, think and act. Not only to raise his brothers, but also to lead the struggles, defend the forest, create the Extractivist Reserves and guarantee the permanence of the rubber tappers in their allotments. At the time, Chico was still aimless. He completed his education by attending Mobral (Brazilian Literacy Movement) and, on his own initiative, tried to organize a group to discuss the creation of cooperatives to achieve autonomy for the rubber tappers. He also became interested in the Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) of Bishop Moacyr Grechi's church, through which he would gain more allies. In 1979, the local superintendence of Incra (the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform) leaked a worrying report naming the alleged new owners of Acre. The document records 218 large estates totaling 5.8 million hectares,

and 3,102 large estates covering 6.4 million hectares (how unequal!). It concludes by saying that 80% of Acre's land (16.4 million hectares) is in the hands of large landowners, land grabbers and speculators". In its May 1980 issue, *Varadouro*, an alternative newspaper that was born to support the struggle of rubber tappers, river dwellers, squatters and indigenous people, published a list of them: Agropecuária Cinco Estrelas S.A.; Grupo Cruzeiro do Sul; Fazenda Boa Esperança, owned by José Bento and Pedro Bento Valias; Fazenda Morungaba, Agronorte and Condomínio Tarauacá, all owned by Agapito Lemos; Condomínio Acurawa, working with three contractors and 30 subcontractors under the responsibility of a Paraguayan named Pablo. In total, this represents 1.3 million hectares in Tarauacá, in the Juruá Valley. Paranacre (Cia Paranaense de Colonização Agropecuária e Industrial do Acre), also in Tarauacá, represented by the Viação Garcia group and others, claimed to exploit cattle and rubber on 600,000 hectares. In the neighboring municipality of Feijó, the Novo-Oeste Development Company, owned by the Atlântica Boavista Group, had acquired 510,000 hectares. Also in Feijó, at the headwaters of the Envira River, Fazenda Califórnia (Atalla Group) owned 427,000 hectares, but was trying to legalize 604,000. At the farm's headquarters, indigenous Kulina people were seen working as cowboys. In the Acre and Purus valleys, the situation was more tense, because access to the disputed areas was easy for both the aggressors and the aggrieved. In Xapuri, in particular, the Bordon farm foreman, Tomás, reacted violently to the standoffs. After fighting so much with the rubber tappers, the company gave up the project in the state. In Brasília, Wilson Pinheiro's land, Fazenda Carmem (in the Carmem Rubber Plantation) tried to "clear" the area through agreements that were unfavorable to the squatters. The most scandalous case was that of [the colonization company] Coloama (Colonizadora Agropecuária São Paulo Amazonas S.A.). Its initial project, which envisaged the construction of a city with buildings of up to 12 floors for rubber tappers, was approved for development in the south of Amazonas, but there was a legal impediment because it was in an area of 500,000 hectares less than 150 meters from a federal road. The owner, Pedro Aparecido Dotto, from Jales (SP), didn't hesitate: he transferred the project to Sena Madureira, in Acre, without any modifications. He had the guarantee of CR\$40



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million from Probor, Proterra and Basa, but Incra requested the annulment of his registration as a colonizer and started a judicial process to challenge the documentation of the properties. The colonization company wanted to regularize an area of four million hectares. The landowners hired peons and enforcers from outside the state, so as not to create family ties which locals would have. And also because a large part of the rubber tappers didn't agree with cutting down rubber and Brazil nut trees, let alone setting fire to the forest. Labor was imported from Cascavel and other cities in Mato Grosso and Paraná. These people were rounded up at police stations, so they traveled by bus, in dirty clothes and with their heads shaved. Cattle rancher Benedito Tavares do Couto, from Mato Grosso, even hired a Boeing 737 to bring 70 chainsaw operators to Rio Branco. The regional delegate of the Ministry of Labor, Humberto Brasiliense, accompanied the Contag team a few times to investigate complaints about the existence of private cemeteries in deforestation areas. The strength of the 8 unions set up by Contag came to the fore in a standoff called "Mutirão contra a Jagunçada [Collective Action against the Enforcers]". It took place in September 1979 on the banks of the BR-317 highway, near the town of Boca do Acre, in the south of the state of Amazonas. Squatters in the area were being threatened by enforcers maintained by a wealthy cattle rancher from São Paulo, who was interested in the lands of the Senápoles Rubber Plantation. They complained that the enforcers used machine guns and rifles to kill domestic animals and scare families with shots at dusk. The unions gathered 300 men to confront the aggressors. The thugs, 12 in number, ran into the bush and were taken in by neighboring ranchers who transported them by car and single-engine plane to other municipalities. But the union members arrested the foreman and 45 peons, who were only released after being subjected to a kind of tribunal set up in the middle of the highway (BR-317). Overjoyed with the result, Wilson Pinheiro gave an interview to Brasília radio stating that the unions would not, from that moment on, allow any trees

to be felled in the whole state. The farmers' response was immediate and angry: "If that's the case, there will be many widows in Acre!" The first of these was Wilson's wife, Terezinha Pinheiro, whose husband was murdered by gunmen waiting at the headquarters of the Brasília Rural Workers' Union on July 21, 1980. As on other occasions, the police found it difficult to identify and arrest the criminals, but the workers, on their way back from the wake, killed the main suspect, foreman Nilo Sérgio, whom they found on the road between Brasília and Assis Brasil. Metalworker Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was at the wake and gave a speech saying: "It's time for the jaguar to drink water"; that's why he was indicted under Institutional Act No. 5, created during the military dictatorship, along with João Maia, Chico Mendes, Joaquim Francisco da Silva (national president of Contag) and metalworker leader Jacob Bittar, from the ABC in São Paulo. Chico Mendes took command of the movement from Xapuri. The new leader won allies for the Acre resistance in the city, in the country and even abroad. In 1985, he created the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), which discussed issues such as Extractivist Reserves, community and national exploration of Amazonian biodiversity, conservation units, demarcation of indigenous areas, environmental impact studies on roads and other projects opened in the region. Chico Mendes' struggle was monumental and dangerous. In the 1970s and 1980s, a bad energy spread throughout the state. Extractivist society was writhing in pain, but hardly anyone cared. The advantages, rights, laws and opportunities offered by the military regime excluded the pioneering spirit and tradition of the land. The chainsaws rumbled through the forest and the fire followed behind, scorching the landscape. Those who were most concerned about the future of the extractivist tradition were the under-educated of the forest, like Chico Mendes. They were the ones who resisted with the standoffs and brought the struggle to the city. The Federal University of Acre (Ufac), whose profile was the subject of a study by specialist Oswaldo Sevá, a professor at Unicamp, concluded

that the institution was "too quiet for the effervescent society that surrounded it". The dean, Áulio Gélío, would receive unsolicited messages from the dictatorship's colonels, he was scared to death of them, but instilled fear in teachers and students. By then, Chico was already an experienced lecturer and had built up a good list of allies. Among these were anthropologist Mary Allegretti, who had known him since 1978 and never let him go; Bill Clinton's advisor (former president of the United States), anthropologist Steve Schwartzman, whose studies had been carried out in the Amazon, and Adrian Cowell, the British filmmaker who ended up making the best documentary film about Chico Mendes, "I Want to Live". In the 1970s, the Acre press was subject to the rules of the military regime. There was only one daily newspaper circulating in the capital, "O Rio Branco", from Assis Chateaubriand's Diários Associados network. TV Acre, an affiliate of Rede Globo, Rádio Difusora, the state broadcaster, and Novo Andará, owned by former governor Wanderley Dantas (1971–1974), supported the idea of "bovinization" of the rubber plantations. The conflicts in Acre began to be publicized when the newspapers O Estado de S. Paulo and Jornal do Brasil established correspondents working in the state, starting in 1975. Two years later (1977), the alternative newspaper "Varadouro" began to circulate, with the slogan "Newspaper of the Jungle", with Elson Martins (from the newspaper Estadão) and Silvio Martinello (JB) as its founders. The first six editions were paid for with a loan obtained from Bishop Moacyr Grechi, who had previously dealt with the conflicts in the mimeographed newspaper "Nós, Irmãos[We, Brothers]". What was happening in Acre was incomparable to what was happening in other regions. Dissatisfaction with the dictatorship was common, but differed in discourse and forms of resistance. What Chico Mendes brought from the forest was new for those fighting in the city. There was less code, more transparency. Chico contemplated alliances that were considered impossible. After all, before the creation of the PT, he had been elected as an MDB



councilman in Xapuri with the declared support of his boss, a rubber baron. The rubber tappers' struggle to defend the forest and the entire environment of Acre was gradually gaining the sympathy of the rubber barons who didn't want to see the forest fall to the ground. Chico knew how to surround himself and learn lessons from researchers, environmentalists, political scientists, union leaders, left-wing parties, but above all, he used the press. With genius, he wanted to make the struggle of the rubber tappers and Indians of Acre global. He drew attention to the value of the forest and traditional populations, to their cultures, their feelings and beliefs. In March 1989, months after he was assassinated, the Extractivist Reserves were created where the rubber tappers could remain in their colonies without further threats. The proposal became a model of agrarian reform for the Amazon and other regions of the country. Today, the Peoples of the Forest are free and defend sustainable development based on the rational use of Amazonian biodiversity. In Acre, more than 50% of the land is protected by Conservation Units and all the Indigenous Lands have been demarcated. In total, the state has around 80% standing forest. In 1998, the party (PT) that Chico helped create in 1982, won the Forest Government inspired by his ideas. Planning, science, technology and Acre's tradition are guiding the construction of a new Amazonian society. Today, Acre is the Amazon state best known in the world for practicing a low-carbon economy, with support from international banks such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank (BIRD) and KFW (German). Its "sustainable development" prioritizes the protection of the global environment. After 20 years of the PT government in the state, which began in 1999, the left-wing political leaderships are not as threatened as before, but they have lost some of their strength due to demobilization. They are lost in the midst of the bureaucracy and centralization of the government they created, which in 2022 will have a Bolsonaro government. Acre remains an Amazonian state with an air of sustainability, but the threats are reappearing. It is increasingly

difficult to identify the risks and also the leaders who can face them with political awareness. Today, the government finds it difficult to recognize the preferred protagonists of Acre's development. Indigenous peoples, riverine communities and rubber tappers are no longer as miserable as they once were. The extractivists, now monitored by ICMBio (Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity), now have some science and technology to use the forest's resources. But the temptation of cattle ranching and agribusiness has not gone away, which leads us to think of new ties. Anthropologist Mary Allegretti says that Chico Mendes was the first person to say that the forest is worth more standing than deforested. It would have taken scientists longer to be sure of this. The director of the Amazon Museum (MUSA) in Manaus, physicist and biologist Ennio Candotti [1942–2023], agrees that the region's greatest wealth is revealed by research into microorganisms from the plants found there. In an article published on the museum's website, Candotti makes an encouraging comparison about the molecule Bergenin, extracted from the Uxi-Amarelo plant: "a gram of gold is worth 200 to 300 reais; a gram of bergenin is worth 1 million reais". How much is 1 hectare of forest cut down to feed just two head of cattle worth? Chico Mendes would know the answer. In unfavorable times, with a military dictatorship and little regard for Amazonia, he, outside the standards of the intelligentsia, speaking and writing with little education, revealed himself to be a revolutionary, universal and loving, capable of confronting insane aggressors and teaching his companions to fight for a simple and natural life. Chico Mendes spoke, wrote, traveled and shouted to the world in defense of the environment. And he filled the helpless eyes of the Amazon with tears and pride.

Elson Martins



Philly Cowell



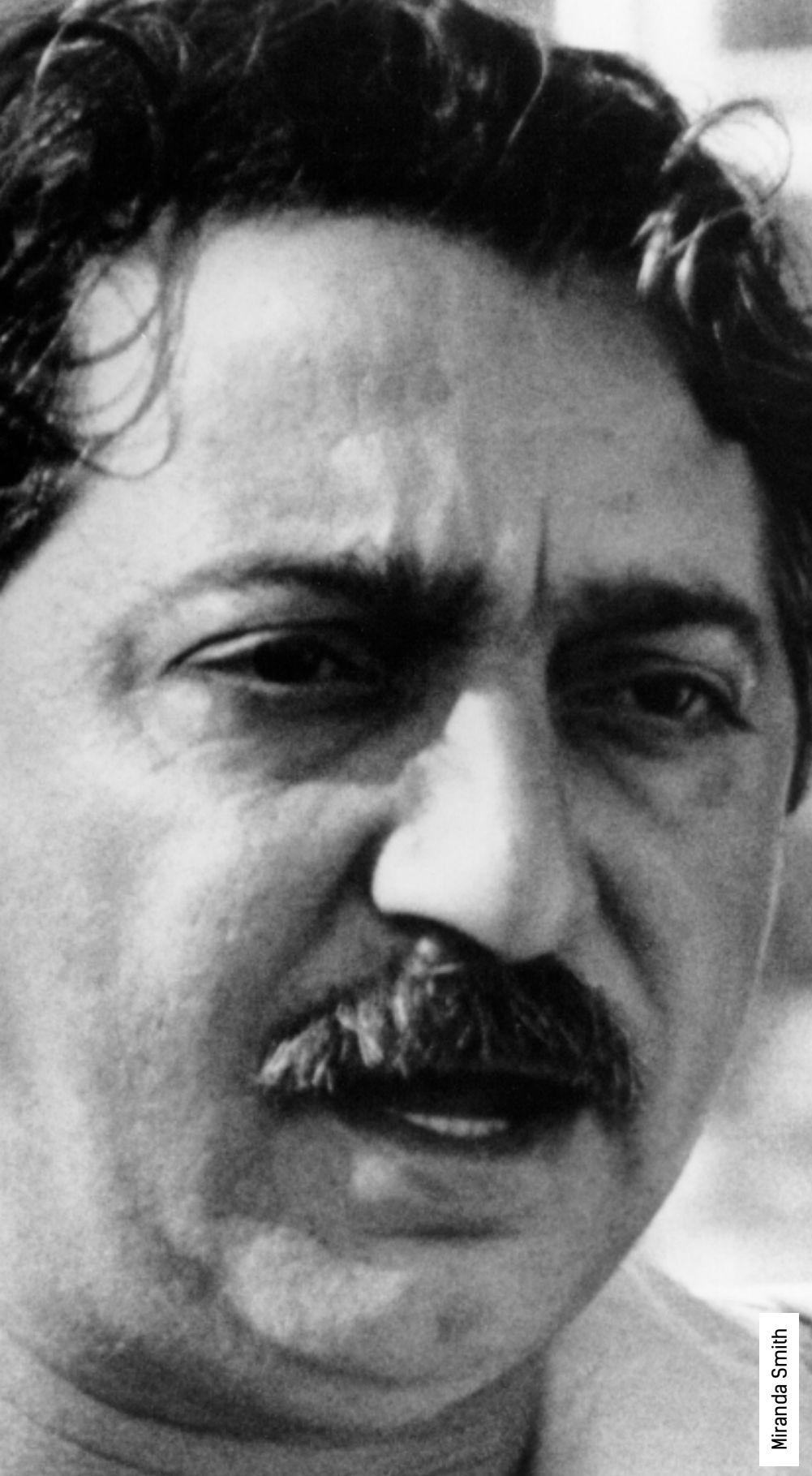
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ROOTS





Miranda Smith

Here, the boss wouldn't let the rubber tapper's son go to school. School was radically forbidden in the rubber plantations. I, for example, started at the age of 9, crawling, learning to walk through the forest to cut rubber and help my father, because I had to contribute to the boss's increased production. If I went to school, if a school was created, what would happen? Production would decrease, because the rubber tappers' children would have to go to school, they would waste time, so the boss wouldn't let them. What happened? 99% of the rubber tappers, of the rubber tappers' children, were all illiterate. The story of my study sounds like subversion. At that time, we [were] very young together and we didn't know anything. I was lucky, my father knew a little bit, the ABCs. [But] my real luck was that, in the rubber plantation where we worked, in the region where I lived at the time – which was about 5 or 6 kilometers from the border with Bolivia – I discovered a political exile, a companion of [Luiz Carlos] Prestes, who was part of the [Communist] Intent of '35. He was arrested on the island of Fernando de Noronha. He managed to escape, went to Pará, fled Belém, on a ship, in shorts, went to Bolivia, got involved in the resistance movements of Bolivian workers, [at a] time of repression in Bolivia. He couldn't escape: he was trapped and preferred the forest option. He had a shack about 7 kilometers from the Bolivian border. One day, one afternoon, when Miranda Smith and I were coming in from the bush, this fellow came to our house. We were smoking. He took a liking to me and made a pact with my father that, on weekends, I would walk three hours on my feet through the jungle to get to his shack, where he was interested in teaching me to read. My lessons were given through newspaper clippings that I don't know how he received. He also



had a radio and part of my lessons were as follows: one evening, we would listen to the Portuguese commentaries on the Voice of America, I had no knowledge of international news until then. I didn't understand it either, just like the rest of my classmates. Then he started explaining the idea to me. He began to tell me what the ideology of the Americans meant and so on. The next day, he made me listen to the BBC London commentaries. My lessons were like that, with the radio. The next day, he'd listen to the commentary on Central Radio in Moscow. It was 64, the time of the military coup [and Moscow Central Radio] said: "Look, so many union leaders in Brazil are being tortured. We send our international solidarity to the Brazilian patriots who are being tortured, victims of repression, of the Military Dictatorship that was articulated by the CIA". That's how he taught me. The Voice of America said: "The Democratic and Popular Revolution in Brazil, the danger of Communism". Then he would take an evening to explain the situation to me, the position of this one, the position of that one. At that time, I was 19, almost 20 years old. But we started in '62, '63. The BBC in London ran a parallel story: it reported on one side and the other on the other. So he said: "Oh, the BBC in London is a broader radio station, it doesn't defend the ideology of the British, of the government, it reports on what's happening in the world". He told me to stay tuned to the BBC. This man explained to me what was happening during that period we were facing, even though we were isolated. "But who knows, Chico – in five, ten, eight years' time – the workers' resistance movement will start to emerge. New unions will be created, and the dictatorship will have to accept them. Now, all of this will be controlled by military ideology. All these unions

"will see intervention," and that's what happened. "Now here's the thing: you can't not join that union. It will arrive: maybe today, maybe tomorrow. The union for the rubber tappers will arrive and you'll join. You can't stop not join the union because that's where you'll put down your roots. That's what will root you. I guarantee that one day, if they don't kill you, you'll be a great force for your comrades". I thought to myself: "Will that ever happen?" His name was Euclides Fernandes Távora.

[Testimony recorded by Lucélia Santos, in May 1988].

Chico Mendes





ESTHER BRAGA

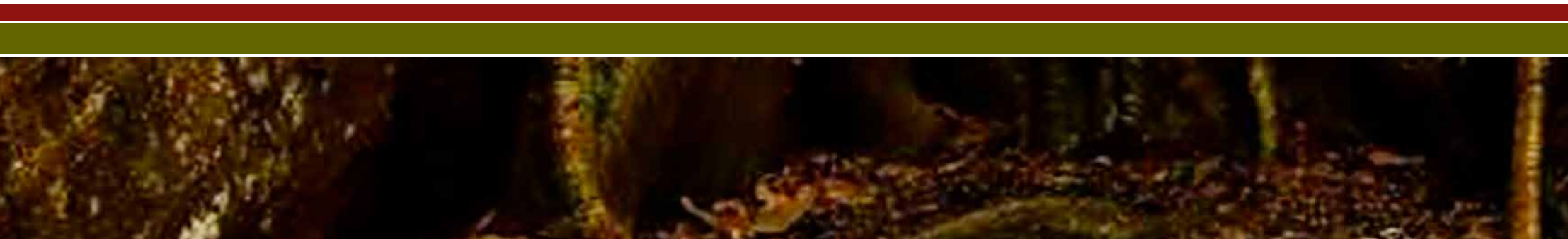
Esther Braga de Araújo Mendes, daughter of João Gabriel Mendes and Luise Braga, came into the world in October 2021. João Gabriel Mendes is the grandson of Chico Mendes and Luise Braga is the granddaughter of Mestre Raimundo Irineu Serra, the spiritual leader of the Santo Daime Doctrine, founded in Acre at the beginning of the 20th century. Esther's birth celebrates on Earth a meeting of the descendants of two great leaders who are no longer on this plane, but who have left, each in their own way, a legacy of love for the generations of now and those who will come after us.

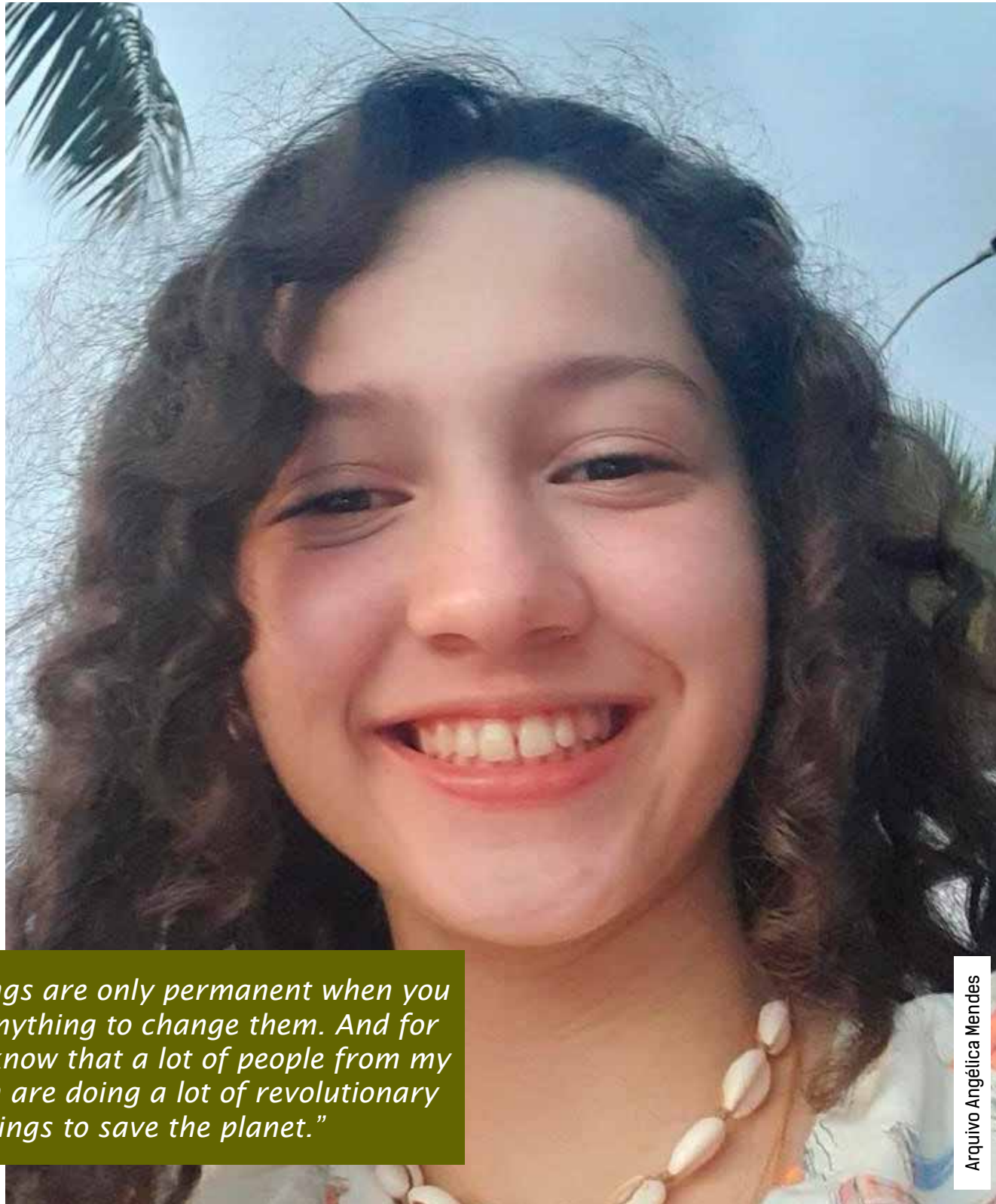


Arquivo Angela Mendes

LÍVIA MAMEDE

My name is Livia Mamede Ortega. I'm Angélica's daughter and Grandma Angela Mendes' granddaughter. Chico Mendes is my great-grandfather. I didn't know my great-grandfather because he lived in a different time than me. But living with my mother, my grandmother and his friends, I feel as if I had known him, I feel his presence. I'm sorry he's gone too soon. I'm sorry that he didn't get to see his struggle recognized. I'm sorry he's not here with us to see how our family has grown and how things have changed since he left. Sometimes I feel sad because some people still think that everything he stood for was in vain, that they won't be affected by the climate crisis, which has already arrived and is there for everyone to see. Or that there's no more time to change course, that the damage to nature is already "permanent". I think differently. I think that things are only permanent when we don't do anything to change them and, for my part, I know that many people of my generation are doing a lot of revolutionary things to save the planet. Because, for me, it's like my great-grandfather Chico Mendes said: "At first, I thought I was fighting for the rubber trees. Then I thought I was fighting to save the Amazon rainforest. Now I realize that I'm fighting for humanity." It's messages like this, from my great-grandfather, that motivate us young people today to keep fighting so that people of future generations can know that my generation didn't pass through this planet of ours "for a stroll". Because, in our own way and in our own time, we too are in the fight, because we know how important the Amazon is for the future of the planet and of humanity itself.





"I think things are only permanent when you don't do anything to change them. And for my part, I know that a lot of people from my generation are doing a lot of revolutionary things to save the planet."

Arquivo Angélica Mendes



MARIA HELENA MENDES



Listening to all my grandfather's deeds and stories and knowing the impact he had on the society of his time, and that of today, makes me very proud to be Chico Mendes' granddaughter. My grandfather was a great rubber tapper, a great environmentalist and a great fighter in defense of the Peoples of the Forest. Today, the grandfather I was unable to meet in person because he was unjustly murdered at the behest of the latifundia, who were against the protection of the forest he defended, has become a symbol of the fight to preserve the Amazon. Unfortunately, I didn't get the chance to meet him, but I'm sure he would have been a great grandfather. I wish I'd had the chance to spend time with him. In the future, I intend to pass on all the lessons I learned from his story and I hope that my children will inherit the courage I inherited from him. I hope that my grandfather's legacy will continue to inspire many people for many years, for many decades, forever.

"I hope that my grandfather's legacy will continue to inspire many people for many years, for many decades, forever."



MARIA LUÍSA MENDES

One of my greatest prides is being the granddaughter of a man who was so intelligent, such a warrior and so empathetic. Hearing my mother talk about what a loving and caring father he was makes me certain that he would have been an incredible grandfather. My grandfather was a very brave man, always thinking of the best for his family, the forest, the population and those who continue the fight after him. His courage and his words still impact and move many young people who seek to improve the environment. It wasn't until I was a teenager that I realized the importance of my grandfather's story. It was then that I decided to open my mind to more critical thinking, to research his story and to understand that this struggle is constant and cannot stop. I understood that we need to continue this movement that he started. Once again, I repeat: I'm proud of the man he was and I'm sorry that I've been robbed of the opportunity to be with him and of the affection I would certainly have received from my grandfather.

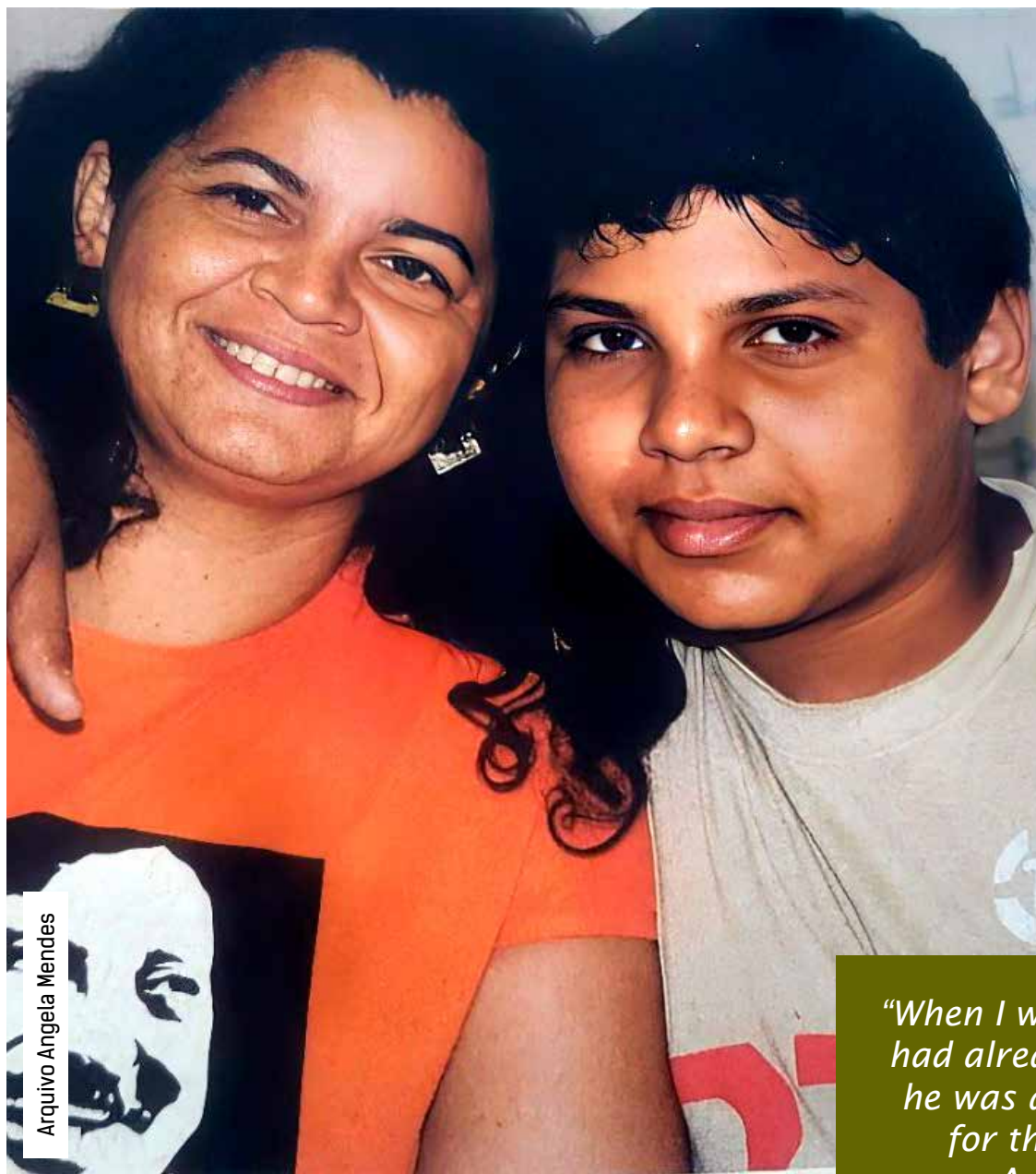
"My grandfather was a very brave man, always thinking of the best for his family, for the forest, for the population and for those who continue the fight after him."



Arquivo Elenira Mendes



JOÃO GABRIEL MENDES



I'm João Gabriel, Angela's son and Chico Mendes' grandson. When I was born, my grandfather had already died, but I know that he was a very important person for the preservation of the Amazon rainforest. I also know that many people follow his example and continue to fight for the same cause he did. I just hope that none of these people die as cruel a death as my grandfather did.

"When I was born, my grandfather had already died, but I know that he was a very important person for the preservation of the Amazon Rainforest."



ANGÉLICA MENDES

I think that my grandfather's struggle was essential for the future of the Amazon, the planet and, as he himself wrote, humanity. I therefore believe that Chico Mendes' struggle must never end. Each generation needs to know the letter that my grandfather left for the youth of the future, to understand the importance of taking responsibility for the part that still needs to be done, because that is how his legacy will continue to guide us through future struggles.

"I think my grandfather's struggle was an essential one for the future of the Amazon, the planet and, as he himself wrote, humanity."



Arquivo Angélica Mendes



ANGELA MENDES

I'm Angela Maria Feitosa Mendes, Chico Mendes' eldest daughter. The year my father was murdered, I was 18 and pregnant, expecting Angélica Francisca, my first child. As we didn't live together all the time, with him in the struggle and me here in Rio Branco, I thought that perhaps I wouldn't feel so much the foretold death that he himself knew was coming. But when my father died, it was horrible. To this day it's not easy for me to talk about it, because it still touches me so much. It was as if the ground had fallen out from under my feet. I fell into a pit of despair because I couldn't understand how someone as dear as my father could be killed in such a cowardly way. Fate separated my father from me at an early age. He married my mother in 1968 or 1969, I'm not sure, and their financial situation was precarious, of extreme poverty even. He was already involved in the Movement, and they had no income. They only had me and my sister, who died when she was 11 months old, due to the precariousness of the remote place where we lived, with no medical treatment. I had to move in with other family members in Rio Branco, because the situation was so difficult. My father separated from my mother, and fate separated us all. But I've had contact with my father ever since I was little, because he always came to see me when he passed through Rio Branco. Our last meeting took place just the week he was murdered,

because he came to see me when he arrived back from his trip to Xapuri. But to this day, every time I think about him, talk about him, hear his name, I go through the same pain as 35 years ago. I really miss our games, the affection we had for each other, the desire we had to be together every day. During his visits to Rio Branco and my trips to Xapuri – that year I spent my vacation with him – we formed very strong bonds. The last time we saw each other, our farewell was very affectionate, very understanding and then, suddenly: I find out I'm never going to see him again. After my father's death, I joined the Movement and went to work at the Amazon Workers' Center (CTA), at the invitation of Júlia Feitoza and Rosa Roldán, who took care of me and gave me a lot of strength when I needed it most. I worked at the CTA for 12 years and there I had contact with rubber tappers from all over the world. This was very fulfilling for me, because I was close to people who live in the same situations and in the same world as my father. From the CTA I went to the Chico Mendes Committee, of which I am now president, and where I do a job that I am very proud of. Firstly, because I am close to the people who were my father's friends and, secondly, because we are fighting to preserve his memory, so that his legacy is never forgotten. Only in this way will we be able to keep him alive in our lives, always strengthening our struggle.





Angela Mendes

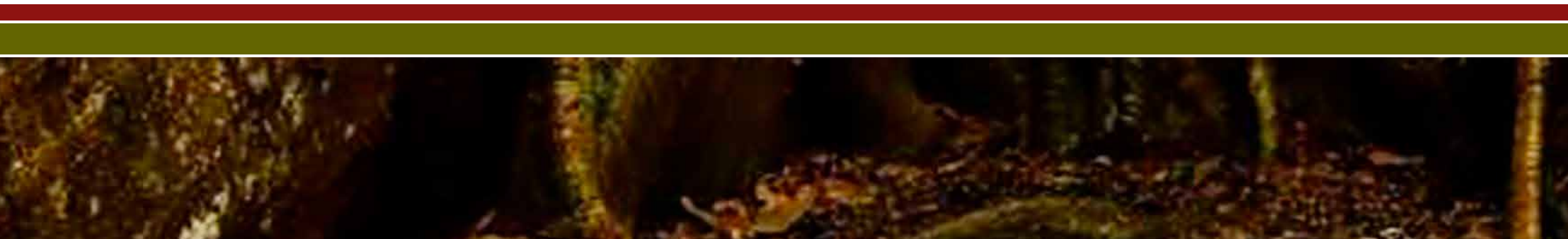
"Today, at the Chico Mendes Committee, we are fighting to preserve my father's memory, so that his legacy is never forgotten."



ELENIRA MENDES

My memories of my father are a little vague, a little distant. But I remember December 22, 1988 very well. I remember that day very well. I think it was a kind of farewell, when he took Sandino and me for a ride in that new truck that the union had just won. I remember that night, it was around 6pm, we were in the living room. My mother fed Sandino and me on the same plate. I remember that my father went out to have a shower and there was all this confusion, with the police running in the opposite direction than us, us running to the kitchen and, suddenly, he [Chico] comes and falls right there, right in front of our bedroom door. He tries to say Elenira, but he can't speak my name. I remember him lying there on the floor, bloodied, trying to say my name. This is a question that will always live inside me: what did he want to say to me at that moment? I grew up with that scene in my mind and I don't think it will ever be erased. I also grew up with a great deal of anger towards the Movement because, in my conception – in which the only memory of my father was seeing him, there, on the ground, dying – the Movement had caused the loss of my father. The feeling I had was that I had lost my father because of this Peoples of the Forest struggle, and that really, really hurt me. I couldn't understand how much he loved this struggle, which was so important and so beautiful. This feeling lasted until my 19th birthday. On that day, my aunt showed me some photos of me with dedications from my father. On the back of one of them was written: "You are the vanguard of hope. Elenira, you will one day continue the fight that your father could not win." It was as if the bullet that hit him in the chest at the beginning of the night, which caused the physical loss of his life, was going deep into my chest. It was as if he was telling me that it was my time to wake up, because I had a mission to fulfill. So, I thought that maybe there was at least part of the answer to what he tried and failed to tell me at the time he was dying.

That really moved me. From then on, I started to get involved with my father's cause; to look for more information about Chico Mendes' struggle; to want to know more about the legacy he had left not only for me, Elenira, as his daughter, but for all the youth of the future, as he wrote in that beautiful message to young people in general, to me, to Sandino, to Angela. I needed to do something as a daughter, as a young person. I started by taking on the responsibility of organizing the collection and looking after his house, that small and symbolic space, capable of attracting people from all over Acre, Brazil and the world: Chico Mendes' house, the house where we lived, the house where I spent the short time I had with my father. I couldn't stand by any longer. I had to get involved. I know that none of this is going to bring my father back, but it's very good to know that his struggle had results and bore fruit. These records [in this book] can preserve the history of my father and his comrades, because in a while Raimundão [Raimundo Barros] will be gone, Júlia Feitoza, Raimunda Bezerra, Guma [Gomercindo Rodrigues], Júlio Barbosa, they'll all be gone. And the importance of their knowledge is too great to remain unrecorded. We need to share this story with the young people of Xapuri, Acre and Brazil. From the bottom of my heart, the greatest gift Brazil could give to my father's memory would be to reduce deforestation in the Amazon. My greatest joy would be, one day, to know that the Amazon has reached the dream of Zero Deforestation. I know it's just a dream, but I'll never stop dreaming my dream, because this was the example my father taught me, through his life practice, in the short four years we lived together and in the much I've been learning about his dream. Because that's what my father lived for and that's what he died for: to conserve the forest as a healthy, economically viable and environmentally sustainable place, without having to destroy it.

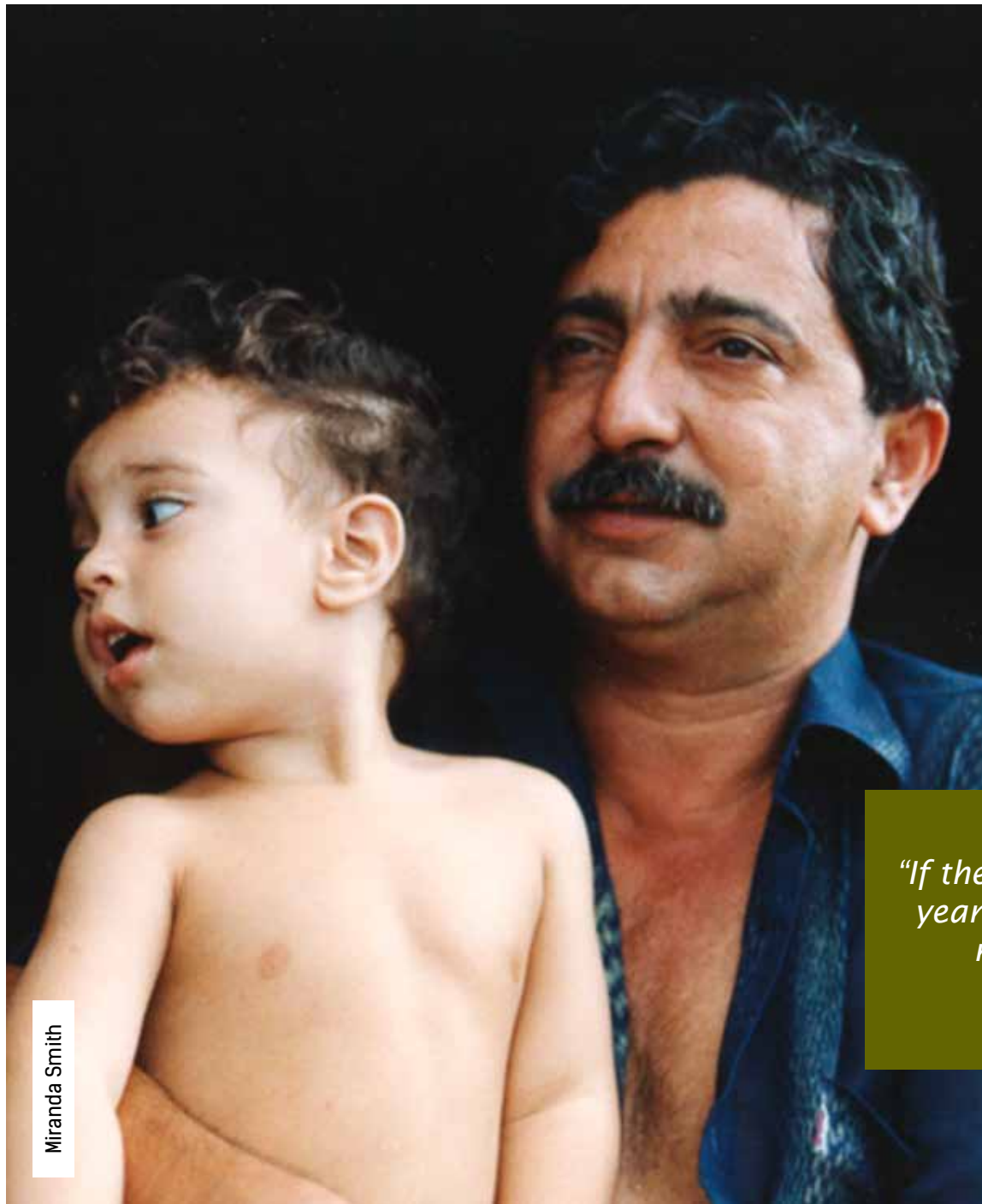


*"You are the vanguard of hope.
Elenira, one day you will continue the
struggle that your father
could not win."*
Chico Mendes

Elenira Mendes



SANDINO MENDES



Miranda Smith

Since my father's death, Acre has undergone a great process of economic and social development. My father always dreamed of seeing a more developed Acre, but one that also respected the rights of rural workers, indigenous people, extractivists and forest peoples. This was my father's goal while he was alive, even if it went against the political project of the time. My father left us several lessons, among them that only together can we achieve our goals and that it is possible, yes, to progress without destroying. Unfortunately, my father couldn't live to see some of his dreams come true.

"If there's one thing I'm sure of after 35 years, it's that my father's death was not in vain, because his ideals are still alive."





Elson Martins



ILZAMAR GADELHA MENDES



Miranda Smith

I met Chico when I was very young. At the time, I was six or seven years old. Chico was a rubber tapper and used to cut rubber trees in my father's allotment. At the time I was very young and he looked after me like an older brother. At the same time as he was looking after me, he was teaching me how to read. It was Chico who made me literate. At that time, Chico was already teaching us the importance of organization, of participating in the Movement, he was already training us to be leaders. As well

as learning to sign our names and do some math, the most important thing was the awareness he was raising. When we were little, he was already passing on the importance of the union, of the struggle. He would tell us, as if it were a story, about our parents' suffering under pressure from the bosses, about the bosses stealing from us in the price and weight of rubber, because we didn't know how to read to check the math. The first thing Chico taught us, even before letters, was numbers. It was learning to add up, to do math, because he said that this way there wouldn't be any more rubber tappers cheated by their bosses. We learned right there, in the middle of class, what a union was; at that time there wasn't even a union yet, but he was already working with the people to found the *Brasileia* Union. After that, we separated for a few years. I grew up and became a young woman. From the age of 14 to 15, I met Chico again. It was something else then, when we fell in love. He was very handsome, I always thought he was very handsome. He had a special way of treating people. There was no way around it: at first it was glances, and then you could tell that the two of us were in love. But as it was prohibited at the time, my mother wouldn't let us lay a finger on each other. Kissing, then, no way. It was like that: he'd look at me, I'd reciprocate, always like that, everything being understood through looks. Until, when I turned 15, Chico decided to tell my father that he wanted to date me. He said he meant well, that he

wanted a serious commitment. Then came two years of dating, from the age of 15 to 17. We got married at the registry office in Brasília, but the celebrations – very simple – were held at Colônia Santa Fé, in the Morada Nova Allotment, where I was born and raised along with my parents' eight children. My father used to tap rubber there. There's a funny thing: at that time a girl would get married and she would stay at home for two or three days. The guy in the living room, sleeping on the paxiúba wood bench in the living room, and the bride in the bedroom. It was the same with me: I got married without ever having kissed him, then, on the second day, I started preparing things, a lot of crying, and on the third day he took me away. We left for Xapuri and, that same year, Chico was elected president of the union. I married a militant: I would have my husband for a day and then spend 30 days without him, because it was always one trip after another to mobilize the workers and seek support for the comrades' struggle. There was a time when he traveled to the United States. He went to that meeting of the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), to denounce what was happening with the construction of the BR-364 highway – not that Chico was against development, but what Chico wanted was development that was good for the workers – that was good for Brazil, but that didn't destroy the forest. Chico never said he was against development, he always said he wanted development that protected the forest and gave rights to the Peoples of the Forest. But that's when the persecution increased. Acre's politicians, allied with the Federal Police and the landowners, decided to plot his death. Elenira was born in '84 and Sandino was born in '86. Chico really wanted more children. It was very important for him to have a male child, but when Elenira was born he didn't even think about it anymore. He fell in love with the girl straight away. I still remember his joy, his happy smile when he held Elenira for the first time. I remember him still in hospital saying that her name was Elenira,

that his daughter was going to be named after a guerrilla. Then it was the same with Sandino, everything was the same. We had an agreement that if it was a boy I would choose the name, but when the boy was born, Chico decided it would be Sandino, because he wanted to give his son a hero's name. And he ended up winning. Chico won because of the way he explained things. To name a child, he would tell the whole story of that name, telling why it was important for the child. He spoke with such conviction and sweetness that I kept saying: "All right, Chico, have it your way." I always supported Chico in all his decisions. There's a saying that next to every great man there's always a great woman. I'm sure that I was that great woman for Chico, because I took care of him, I took care of our house, I took care of our children on my own, so that he could dedicate his life to the Movement.



Miranda Smith



That was from the day we exchanged our first glance until the final minute of his life, until the time he died. I know I'm the only person who knows all sides of Chico. It was with me that he collapsed. I could see the pressure of suffocation in his eyes. I was this great woman who kept things together with a lot of fear, but also with a lot of companionship, because I believed in what he was doing and I was very much in love with him. And even before the threats, I had to hold it together with the lack of a place to live and the lack of money. Chico had no salary and we depended on the solidarity of our comrades to make ends meet. Always to buy groceries, medicine, clothes for the children, we depended on the help of a comrade. Or it was a rubber tapper who brought a bit of rice, a bit of beans from his allotment. There was always a companion who brought ten kilos of rice, fifteen kilos of beans. Life was hard. Chico had no ambition for himself or for us. And when Chico got some money, he would look at me and say: "My old lady (he always called me my old lady), a quarter of this is for you to buy something for yourself, the rest I'm going to buy for the Union, to give to the comrades when they arrive." Sometimes I walked around barefoot because I didn't have the money to buy a pair of sandals, but the sharing of our money with the union was sacred, because Chico never gave up sharing everything he got with his comrades. Chico was in this fight and I was there, supporting him in everything, following his lead, believing in his words, that fighting was important, that one day things would get better, that one day everyone would be able to live in peace, with the forest producing plenty, without it having to be felled to feed its children. He lived in fear, but full of hope. I was aware of the threats, but I never thought that a tragedy was about to happen. I

"We had very good times, very happy times. With Chico I had a life of good times and very difficult times, because soon the threats from the ranchers began, and it was with me that he spoke first about the risks he was taking. I could see it all happening."

only knew for sure that Chico was going to be killed in the last few months, in the last few weeks, when I heard about the confusion with Darly, about the writ of summons that Chico had obtained, proving that Darly was a criminal before coming to Acre, back in Paraná. Chico told me: "My dear, they're going to use Darly as the front line, but he's only going to be the front line, the people behind my death aren't just the ranchers, they're also the Acre politicians, in league with the Federal Police". Chico knew he was marked for death. He had no doubt that there was no escape. He came home from his trip, he hadn't been home for days. Some people tried to get him to stay in Rio de Janeiro, to stay in Rio Branco. He said no, that he missed me and the children. Everyone said that afterwards, that he missed his family. December 15th was his birthday, and on that day he sat with me on our bed and said he wanted to prepare me, because it was his last birthday alive. My life ended there too, because that time I also knew it was the end. The 22nd was a very special day, because he spent the day with the children, with Elenira and Sandino. That day he had many commitments, but he didn't let go of the children at any moment. Twice during that day, he called Elenira over, put her on his lap and asked: "Elenira, if Dad dies, what are you going to do?" With my heart cut out, I watched Elenira answer: "I'm going to cry a lot, Daddy." And he: "No, little daughter, Daddy doesn't want you to cry, Daddy wants you to grow up and study hard to continue Daddy's fight." Twice he called Elenira and had this conversation with her that day. The rest is a well-known story, but for me it's also a memory and pride in having been able to live with a great man, a great activist, but above all, a great father and a great companion.





Comité Chico Mendes

NILSON MENDES

My name is Nilson Teixeira Mendes, I live here on the Cachoeira Rubber Plantation, Allotment Retiro II. I was born on a neighboring rubber plantation, Seringal Santa Fé, in a place called Cachorra Magra, which is an 8-hour walk from here. I arrived here in Cachoeira in 1969, when I was four years old. This is where I was brought up, where I learned to tap rubber, I learned a lot in this rubber plantation. I have a lot of memories of the time of the standoffs. I left in '81 for Xapuri, for Brasília, to serve in the army. I came back to take care of Chico, because he was waging the standoffs, and I was monitoring him, organizing his security, because of the threats he was receiving. At the time we were doing this security, everything was monitored by the rubber tappers, nobody got close to him without being known, we slept in the backyard of his house, there was no way any enforcers could get close. Chico only lost his life because they invented this thing about public security, about the government putting police to protect his life. Because when it came to us, the enforcers would surround us, surround us and leave. The enforcers knew that to get Chico they had to get at least eight rubber tappers. And if they went near Chico's house, what they were going to kill were other rubber tappers and not him. If it were up to us rubber tappers, Chico would live for a long time. Chico listened to us a lot, but he was the one who decided things. Only once did we decide. A while before he died, he called his comrades together and said he was going on hunger strike to put an end to the torment of the threats. He arrived and immediately said: "I'm going to go on hunger strike, because without stronger action there will continue to be death, there will continue to be threats, there will continue to be deforestation, so I'm going to do it." It was a huge discussion, because the rubber tappers didn't agree. We made a movement, called a priest, called a bishop, called comrades, called lots of people to talk to him. We told him that if he insisted on it, if he went on hunger strike, it would be a crazy standoff because everyone else would do it too, and everyone would die with him. So he decided that if going on hunger strike

required all that confusion, he was just going to die fighting. He said: "So that's it, I'll die on my feet, because I'm a Brazilian and I'm not going to give up the struggle, my place or my ground."

"I remember a lot about Chico Mendes at the time of the standoffs, because he would even talk, he would even be willing to negotiate with the authorities, but he wouldn't give up the fight, he wouldn't stand down."



Sérgio Vale/Agência de Notícias do Acre



Elson Martins



RAIMUNDO MENDES DE BARROS

My name is Raimundo Mendes de Barros, known as Raimundão. I am a rubber tapper by birth and I can say that I am one of the people who had the privilege of living with Chico Mendes as his cousin, friend and companion. It was in the struggle, together with Chico, that I understood the extent of our suffering and that it was through the courage to take a stand – joining other comrades – that we were going to break with oppression. And that's exactly what we did. Without ever having been to school, it was through Chico that I learned a lot about this struggle. Chico was an informed and curious rubber tapper. With him, I learned

about other realities, not from my own perspective, but through the media. I learned about what was happening in Cuba, the Soviet Union, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Chico discussed all this with me and my comrades. What was happening there motivated us to fight in defense of our cause. We had been massacred. We had been subjected to the rubber bosses, to isolation from the benefits of the state, the municipality and the nation, and to the sale of our products at prices that didn't adequately compensate our work. It was a real massacre that happened to us, because we lived like squatters within our allotments: as long as we had the

“Chico Mendes made an unique journey in the social movement. From rubber tapper he became a trade unionist and from trade unionist he became an environmentalist, without losing what was peculiar about each of these positions. His leadership was a synthesis. Chico was right when he said he would be killed, but wrong when he said his death would be pointless. Chico Mendes lives!”
Ronaira Azevedo Mendes



InfoAmazônia/Comitê Chico Mendes

strength to work, we had value; and when we didn't, we were fired and sent away. At the time of the rubber bosses, that was our life. Then came the latifundia and it only got worse. Our rubber could no longer be sold by ourselves. We had to deliver it to the train drivers who came to collect our product from our allotments. We had to take the almost nothing we had, put it on our backs, put our children and wife on the riverbank and go somewhere else. It was always to the outskirts of the cities, where poverty, prostitution, violence and the breakdown of the family came together. The latifundia brought us this. It was against the latifundia that we learned to fight with great energy and that we built what I report with great satisfaction. In the 1970s, we had the collaboration of the Catholic Church through Liberation Theology. Despite the shyness we had, it motivated us, guided us and gave us some knowledge because the repression was very strong. The National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Contag) came from Brasília with delegate João Maia and lawyer

Pedro Marques, who set up the union in the municipality of Brasília where Chico Mendes began his militancy together with Wilson Pinheiro. Wilson was a quiet, soft-spoken citizen, but very firm, very loyal and very responsible. When he died, Lula came to Acre for the first time and gave us great strength to express our pain and take our voice to the whole country. The idea of bringing the PT here was Chico's idea. He went to São Paulo, met Lula and came back with the determination to build the PT. Chico arrived from São Paulo, called his comrades and said: "I bring good news. I've been with Lula. He and his comrades are founding a party, which already has a name: it's going to be the Workers' Party, our PT. And we're the ones who are going to make the PT here in Acre. It's my commitment to Lula." The way Chico presented this idea, it became a commitment for all of us, and we fell in love with it. In 1980, Chico returned from founding the PT in São Paulo as the PT's National Delegate. Here, our meetings were held at the Trade Union, where we talked about education, income, politics, the PT and its creation. And the most interesting thing was that those from other parties didn't feel excluded and had every right to disagree with us. And it was precisely at this time that the Xapuri Union was strengthened. In the discussion, resistance and willingness that Chico showed, the other comrades followed his example and strengthened the PT and the unions in the other municipalities of Acre. However, we had

many difficulties founding the PT here. In the 1980s, to be a member of the PT was to be a communist and people were terrified of communists. And there was another aggravating factor, which was the mentality that rubber tappers, because they were poor, because they had no money, couldn't form a political party. And we were also marked for opposing the landowners. At the time, the landowners were allied with the system and they said we were communists, that we ate children and worshipped the devil. But we thought that if the seed was sown in good soil, no matter how shriveled it was, it would grow and one day bear good fruit. That's what happened. The PT was that little scarred seed, but because the soil was strong and fertile, it managed to grow and reach the size it is today. The PT is the fruit and result of the struggle of peasants, workers and intellectuals who had something to contribute and something to gain from a fairer society. I also want to talk about my cousin, companion and friend Chico Mendes, a great storyteller who could hold everyone's attention without anyone doubting what happened. He inherited this gift from his father, a Ceará native who was famous for telling stories that frightened children to death. Even when he was a boy of eight, Chico peed a lot in the hammock at night, afraid to go downstairs because of the stories his father told. Chico was a good friend and a great counselor. He was a peacemaker in daily conflicts. At the time of the São Paulo invasion, we fought hard to ensure that our comrades who were still in the rubber plantations remained there, and that those who had already left for the city could return to their rubber plantations, even with the difficulty of transporting their belongings. It was important for our comrades to return, and they did. It was a time of great difficulty. We couldn't use the radio to transmit information to our comrades, because the radio was controlled by the authorities. Our struggle was seen in a bad light, as disobedience, as indiscipline to the dictatorship's system. The only way was to use a written note, but since not everyone could read, sometimes communication didn't happen. Even so, we were conquering our spaces, and here I'm referring to education. During all this turmoil, we remembered that, in order to make our work easier, it was essential that we found a way to teach people to read and write. This would make it easier to read a note, make a note to the other members and read something important. And Chico, with the skill he had, contacted other people and, with the support





of comrade Mary Allegretti, who is a great ally in our struggle, we started the first schools on the rubber plantations. Even though I had never been to a classroom, with the little I had learned from my father, I confess that I was a teacher to those who knew nothing. My father was a man who had a little knowledge, he taught me a little and then, by reading and making the effort to write, I learned more. And then, on the Floresta Rubber Plantation, in Rio Branco, where I still live today, I became a teacher together with Rosa and the unforgettable Benedita, whom God has already taken away. It was a journey of a lot of struggle and a lot of construction. Today, we have our forest schools consolidated in almost every corner of our Acre. Over the years, the rubber tappers who lived isolated in the middle of the forest have become citizens with the same rights as those in the city. This is a great achievement. In the 1970s, almost 85% of the people who lived on the rubber plantations didn't have documentation. Today a lot has changed. In these 35 years since the death of my cousin and companion Chico Mendes, I confess that I really wish he were here with us, alive, to witness, to participate in and to celebrate together with us all that we have already managed to build, based on the struggle we started with him. Unfortunately, this is not possible. Chico is not here with us because of the cruelty, cowardice and malice of those murderers who have always had a name, vanity and comfort at the expense of exploiting the Peoples of the Forest.



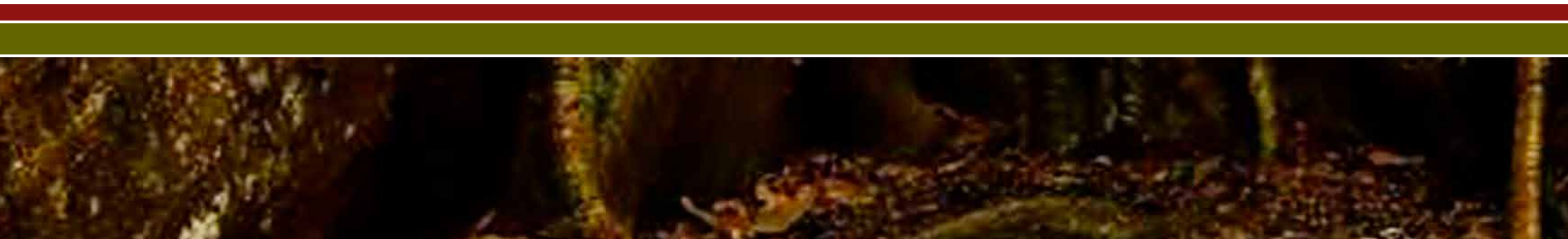
Helio Melo



CECÍLIA MENDES

I'm known as Cecília Mendes, but my name on paper is Cecília Teixeira do Nascimento. I was married to my husband for 51 years, but only in Catholic church, so I never got his name. I always lived on a rubber plantation, everywhere. When I got married, I lived in Seringal Porto Rico, then we lived in two allotments in Santa Fé for almost 20 years, and from there we came here, to Cachoeira, in 1969. We've been here since May 69. I saw how the struggle began. The struggle of the standoffs began from 70 onwards and continued until 88, when Chico was killed. Then I didn't follow it any more, but I was told that the struggle continued in other places, in the same way, with everyone uniting as Chico liked. Here, the struggle began when they wanted to buy Cachoeira. When they wanted to buy it, no, they still bought part of it, they just couldn't get into it. We had to make a crazy standoff, but they couldn't get in. I remember the confusion of that time. We spent three months on the Cachoeira Standoff. A lot of people. It was standoff, standoff, standoff. There were people coming and going, until we won. Our standoff began in March and lasted until April, May and June. Then it calmed down. Chico and the guys kept fighting. A few days before he died, he came here and said to me: "Auntie, now it's over, now Cachoeira is ours. Now everyone will own their place, everyone will own their place. But all this fighting is going to cost blood, and the blood that's going to be spilled is mine." And I said: "Come off it, my son." But he'd tell me: "No, auntie, there's no way: the rubber plantation is ours, but they're going to charge my blood for it." And they did. Chico knew he had to die to leave Cachoeira in the hands of the rubber tappers. The beautiful thing is that after he died the struggle continued. Nobody had the courage to stop. There used to be just a little house here, but now there's a good school and even an inn here in Cachoeira. And nobody has to fight for our place anymore. Chico's father was my husband's legitimate brother. He thought a lot of me. I thought a lot of him too. He meant everything to me. I had 15 children, but one died. So I have 14 living children, and only three in the city. The rest are all here. I've lost count of the

grandchildren. But in the midst of this world of people, the one I miss the most is Chico. I remember him as a child, Chico was a fussy boy when he was little, but after he grew up, he became so calm, so good. He was a very calm person. If he happened to arrive and people were nervous, he would calm everyone down and say: "No, we can't solve problems like this. Come here, let's calm down, let's talk." He was a person who calmed others down. He'd arrive in the middle of a meeting and then he'd be coordinating everything. It was a natural gift he had. Sometimes I think that if they hadn't killed him, a lot of people would have died because, before they killed him, there was violence every day. Now, since his death, everything has calmed down. They certainly thought that by killing Chico everything would stay the same, but that's not what happened. This rubber plantation became a blessed place. Since then, there has never been a fight, no one has ever been killed. Nor do the people here fight, nobody makes a fuss around here because they know about Chico's struggle. There's a school here only because of him. Before, it was just a hut. The first school here in Seringal was built by him. He learned a lot and knew a lot, but not because he went to school, but because he was very curious and kept asking everyone about things. Then there was a guy who worked here, known as Pranchão – but his name was Euclides and I keep forgetting his surname – and it was he who taught Chico to read and write properly. It was with him that Chico studied what little he did. When he brought school here, he said to me: "Auntie, I've learned a bit, but I have no faith in my studies because I've never been tested, I never know if what I've learned is true." Chico never sat on a school bench and he didn't think it should be like that with his children. I suffered a lot at the time of the standoff, because I was very afraid of the violence against Chico and the others. The people would form battalions at all the entrances so as not to let anyone [enforcers, chainsaw operators, etc.] in. The day it was time to go in, the people said: "No one comes through." They came with the bailiff to see if they could pass.



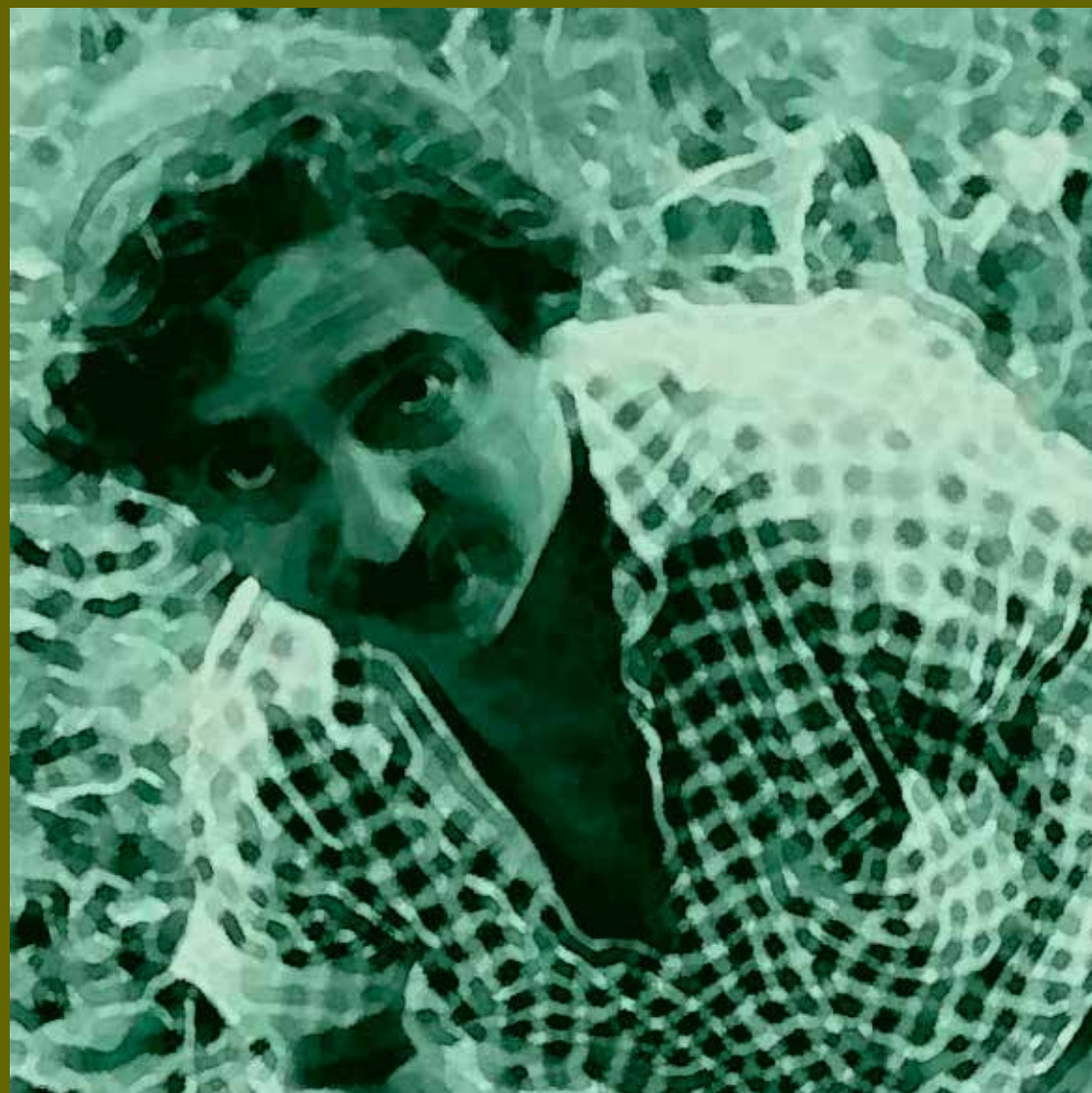
Then, when they arrived and there were lots of people, the bailiff said: "You mean we can't come through?" And Chico said: "No one comes through! No way, no one comes through! We'll talk to you, the bailiff, but our conversation is to say that no one will come through!" Then they talked, talked, and left. But Chico wasn't guilty of anything, he just wanted to defend our place. From here to Rio Branco it was all rubber plantations. Today, where there was no resistance, there isn't a tree left standing. It's heartbreaking! All we see are dry chestnut trees in the middle of the pasture. The heat is already reaching the rubber plantation, some days it's unbearable. We tolerate it well here because there's forest and, when it gets too hot, we go into the forest, bathe in the stream and cool off. But I'm still happy because Chico's friends gave me the Chico Mendes Award in Rio Branco. I never expected to win such a prize. I bought this house with the prize money. I bought the wood, the materials, and my companions built the house for me in a joint effort. It was very nice of them to give me this prize.

"Sometimes I remember Chico and I want to cry, but I don't, because Chico was all about joy. He fought seriously, but also with joy."



Comité Chico Mendes





MEMORY





*“IF AN ENVOY CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN AND
ASSURED ME THAT MY DEATH WOULD STRENGTHEN
OUR STRUGGLE, IT WOULD BE WORTH DYING FOR.
BUT EXPERIENCE TEACHES US OTHERWISE. PUBLIC
ACTS AND LARGE BURIALS WON’T SAVE THE
AMAZON. SO I WANT TO LIVE!”*

CHICO MENDES



ABRAHIM FARHAT, LHÉ

I met Chico in 1968, when I was a candidate for president of the Acrean Student House (CEA), with the support of the Sociocultural Elevation Group (Gesca), made up of Catholic activists linked to Liberation Theology. Gesca was based in the palace of Bishop Giocondo Maria Grotti [killed in 1971] in a suspected plane crash. He was a progressive bishop who fought for human rights and chose to help organize the oppressed in those difficult times of the military regime. I became a candidate and went to Xapuri to seek support for my candidacy. It was on that trip, there in Xapuri, at Casa Zaire, that I met Chico Mendes for the first time. I was introduced to Chico by the store's owner, Zaire, and by one of his managers, Sabiá. At the time, Chico, who worked as a sales assistant in Zaire's store (without a formal contract, I think, because nobody signed a contract at the time), was already a well-known activist in the region. They supported me, and I continued with the campaign, only winning in Xapuri and Rio Branco, with a large majority of votes. In the other municipalities I lost badly, because the school principals campaigned against me, saying that I was supported by a red bishop and the communists. But the good thing about this story was that I met Chico, whom I later met again in 1975, and with whom I became lifelong friends. Talking about these things and reviewing the photos from that time, I keep thinking that we were really good friends. In 1982, we campaigned together for the first time, as candidates for the PT, me for senator and him for state representative of that PT that was emerging as a party of hope for the people who, before, were afraid of what it was to liberate them. Then comes Chico Mendes, part of that Movement that created the PT, which I supported and support. It's a party in which the worker himself begins to become the protagonist of his own story. Before that,

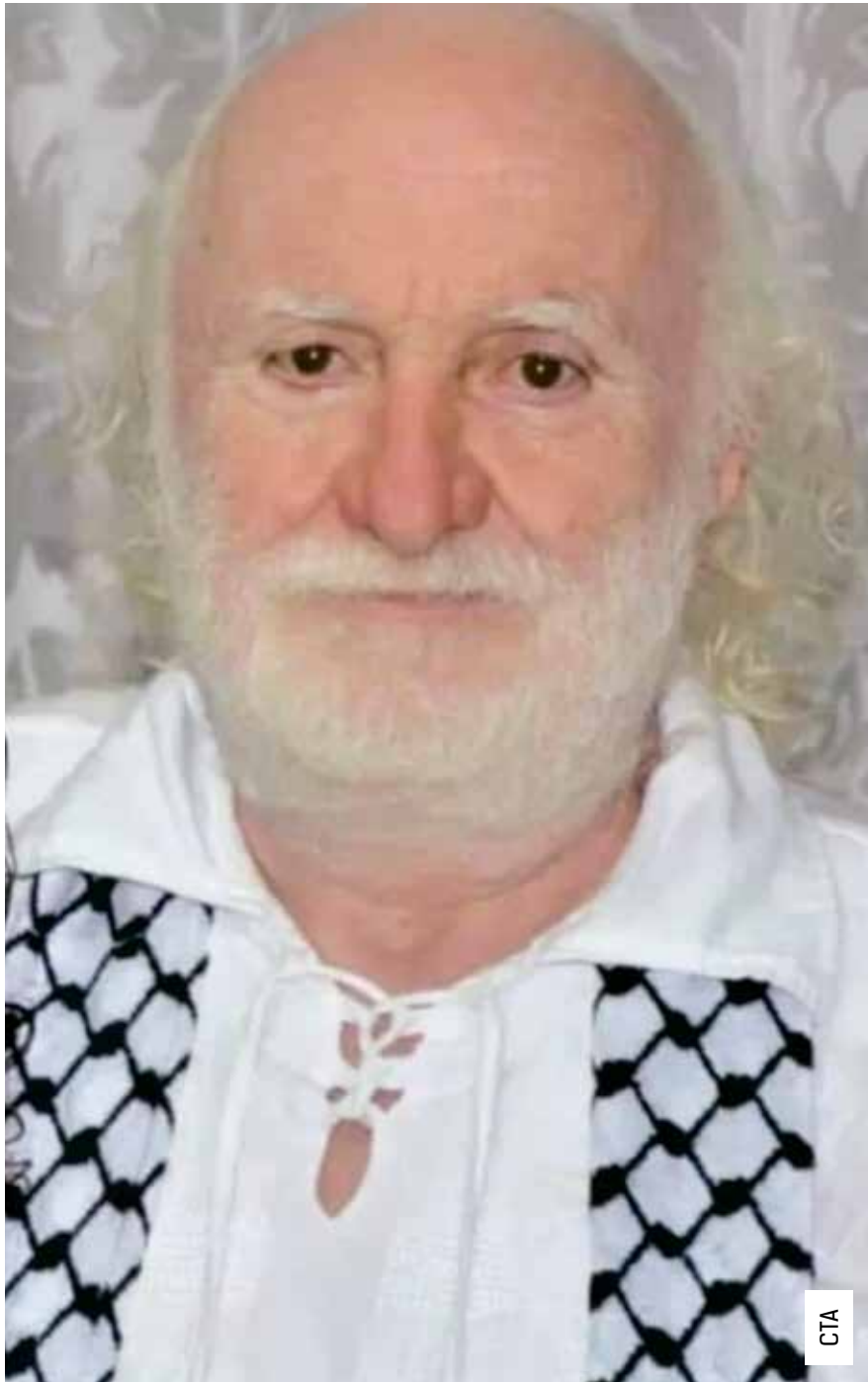
"Chico was like that, the forerunner of a modern left, without rancor, that worked well with differences. Chico's futuristic vision was of a secular, modern, supportive and loving left."

even though Chico was from the PRC (Revolutionary Communist Party), and I was closer to the Church, we got on very well. I always tried to help solve his problems. In 1980, when the party needed to bring José Genoíno to Acre, he came to talk to me about contributing to buy the ticket. I said: "Chico, are you crazy? If Nilson Mourão hears about this, we're both in trouble!" I ended up helping. Even though he was from the PRC, he always managed to make arrangements with the Church, with the priests and with me. Am I not saying that, at his insistence, I helped pay for Genoíno's ticket? Chico was the first president of the PT and the first president of the Unified Workers' Headquarters (CUT) here in Acre, perhaps because he knew how to move within all the left-wing tendencies without giving too much of a damn about their sectarianism. I shared with him and Dom Moacyr this idea that friendships and human relationships are much more important. Chico told us that we had to get out of our navels and talk to everyone; that we had to overcome this defect of the left through our example, as long as we didn't leave ethics behind. One story that Chico experienced and that made him mad was when the kids from Liberdade e Luta (Libelu), because they didn't understand the people as a whole, decided to ban Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary from the lives of PT candidates. Elias Rosendo, a fellow churchgoer, a comrade in the struggle, who was the candidate for vice-governor, arrived at a meeting with the Libelu people and said: "Chico, it can't be done like this. The first thing I do when I wake up is pray to the Virgin Mary, and the last thing I do before I go to sleep is pray to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now these wimps come along and want me to disown my faith, my culture, my identity!" How, I don't know, but Chico did his thing and we continued the campaign with the usual prayers. He believed in a lot of things and, if he



didn't believe them, he didn't disrespect them. There's a recording of him praying a week before he died. He was like a practicing Catholic, because he always had the Church as an ally and prayer as part of the rubber tapper's culture. Chico was like that: the pre-cursor of a modern left, without rancor, who worked well with differences. We would sometimes talk about this and I would tell him about Graciliano Ramos' phrase, which said that "the left only unites in jail". Chico said: "Yes, but we're going to have to change that here in Acre." Chico's futuristic vision was of a secular, modern, supportive and loving left. Chico liked to party a lot, but he was shy when it came to dancing. I don't know if he was really shy or if he avoided dancing to avoid getting involved with women, or if it was out of respect for local values. The fact is that we went to a lot of parties together and he always danced very little. In '82 we went to a joint action [mutirão] 21 km from Xapuri, near Raimundo Barros' allotment. At that time we walked, either because we didn't have the money or because we didn't have the road. I said: "Chico, you know, I'm an urbanite. I can't cope with walking through the woods in such a hurry." The result: instead of making the 7-hour journey he used to make, we made it in a total of 11 hours. We arrived at Mariazinha and Raimundão's place and the house was already full. We slept on some benches and it was one of the best sleeps of my life. After walking all day, any paxiúba wood bench feels like a soft mattress. The next day we went to an adjunct in an allotment that was an hour's walk into the forest. There I saw the beauty of the PT. We spent the day there, where we went to drill the field to plant the rice and beans that, when harvested, would be donated to the PT campaign. We spent the day working with around 50 to 80 rubber tappers, including men and women. In the evening we stopped, took a bath in a slope of very cold water and held a party/political meeting. After the meeting, the forró [typical Brazilian dance party] began. Each worker brought a piece of game – paca, armadillo, capybara, tapir – and the party began. I wanted to dance and Chico just watched. I started dancing with an old lady who dumped me in the middle of the dance, saying that she





couldn't dance with me anymore because I shook my butt too much. And so it went all night: me wanting to dance and the women rejecting me. We spent the day working, the night dancing and, at dawn, I was moved again by the strength of the PT as a mass party, which brought together people like Chico Mendes, Marina and Lula. The PT had that strength. After a delicious breakfast with chestnut milk, couscous and game farofa, I saw an Indian friend of Chico's say: "Che, I'm off". This Indian, who was going there with his wife and five children, had spent the whole day working, the whole night dancing and at that time – from six to seven in the morning – he said he was going because he still had to walk 12 hours through the forest to get to his village, barely rest and go out into the forest in search of his livelihood. I saw that this was the yeast in the dough! That's what we believed when we did the PT in forrós, at meetings, between prayers and birthdays. The next day, back on the road, Chico said to me: "Hey, the women didn't like you very much." I said: "But Chico, why?" And he said: "They were saying that you're too intrusive. That instead of staying outside with the men, you were coming to their bedroom door". I said: "Chico, but I only went to ask Mariazinha if they wanted help washing the dishes, which were a lot." And Chico: "Well, they didn't like that either." And I said: "But Chico, Mariazinha is an evolved comrade. She's part of the militancy. It was only fair that I should do some of the dishes." He looked at me sideways and said: "They didn't like you." In this crazy conversation, he told me I was wrong, without saying that I was wrong. That was Chico's way. He never criticized anyone directly. He always stated the facts and let you do your own thinking. In 1984, things were bad and the PT decided that Chico needed security. With no money, it was decided that the comrades themselves would do his security. I was appointed bodyguard. One of our comrades who has since died, Hélio Pimenta, gave me a .38 revolver, an American Smith West. I stuck that Smith West in

a very pretty Kaxinawá bag I had and headed for Xapuri. One day, we were at the bus station in Xapuri, me with the revolver in my bag, talking to Chico. I don't know if it was just a hunch, but I thought a gunman was coming. Then I said: "Chico, I'm not one for shooting, I'm not one for killing anyone. So that I don't have to do that, here's the deal: if the gang shows up, I'll run one way and you run the other. That way we confuse them. And we'll meet up in Rio Branco." Chico laughed his heart out. Another beautiful thing about Chico was his commitment to ideological principles. One day I was in Rio Branco trying to make a living from my store when Chico arrived with a letter inviting him to visit Israel. He asked me: "Man, what do you think? Am I going or not?" If it were today, I'd say: "Sure, Chico, go and tell him you're going to Israel because you believe in peace. Take the opportunity to say that the visit is also to ask Israel to recognize the Palestinian state, as established in the UN Partition Law of 1947, which has still not been fulfilled." But at the time, sectarianism came into play and I told him not to go. In his letter thanking the Israeli Embassy in Brasilia for the invitation, he explained that he had a lot of respect for the Israelis, but that he wouldn't go, out of respect for the rights of the Palestinian people. Chico didn't go to Israel, but soon after he ended up traveling to the United States. I asked him to bring me a Pan Am blanket, the kind they give out to sleep on the plane. He asked if it was forbidden to take the blanket, and I told him no. I said it was a promotional gift, so that the company would be known. I don't know if he believed me or not, but the fact is that when he got home from his trip he went into my store and said: "Lhé, here's your Pan Am blanket." (Lhé passed away on May 16, 2020)



ANTONIO DE PAULA



Comité Chico Mendes

I've always been here in Juruá, taking part in the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, but I never stopped going to the meetings and assemblies. I went to that Alliance meeting in Rio Branco in 1989, just after Chico died. Since 1992, I haven't missed a single assembly of the National Rubber Tappers' Council (CNS). I even went to New York to take part in Amazon Week, an event I really enjoyed and learned a lot from. Today, people call me a lot to walk along the rivers and tell me stories about those times. They always want to know about the Alliance and Chico Mendes. There isn't a meeting in this forest where the comrades don't remember him, Ivair Higino and Wilson Pinheiro. On my visits, I tell them how it was before, when we were slaves to the colonels of the ravine, and that Chico Mendes' fight wasn't waged with guns, it was waged with the weight of life. He, like all of us, was a man of peace. I explain that we had to resist, because we rubber tappers were very attached to life in the forest. I don't fight with a computer. I only fight with words because I'm an old rubber tapper and an old rubber tapper ends up doing things his own way, being respected by the younger ones. He ends up becoming a bit immortal, like Chico Mendes.

"Chico Mendes was a wise man who liked new things. To continue his struggle, young people need to prepare themselves and understand the knowledge of the forest."





CARLOS WALTER PORTO GONÇALVES

I'll tell you a little about Francisco Alves Mendes Filho, who was born on the Porto Rico rubber plantation, in the municipality of Xapuri, on December 15, 1944. He was the son of northeastern parents who migrated to the Amazon. From an early age he worked as a rubber tapper, sharing the common fate of families whose children, instead of going to school, worked to extract latex. Chico Mendes had the fortune of meeting his great teacher, Euclides Távora, who not only taught him to read and write, but also the path that would lead him to take an interest in the fate of the planet and humanity. Euclides Távora was a communist militant who had actively participated in the Communist Uprising of 1935 in Fortaleza, and also in the 1952 Revolution in Bolivia. Returning to Brazil via Acre, Euclides Távora went to live in Xapuri and became Chico Mendes' teacher, who always spoke fondly of his mentor and political educator, who had disappeared since the civil-military dictatorship coup of 1964. With the training he received from Euclides, education became a real obsession for Chico Mendes, to which he gave a very practical political meaning, as he believed that by knowing how to read and write, the rubber tapper would no longer be robbed by inaccurate counts in the boss's shed. In 1975, already a member of the Ecclesial Grassroot Communities (CEBs), Chico took part in the founding of the Brasília Rural Workers' Union (STR), together with his friend Wilson Pinheiro. In March 1976, he helped organize the first standoff, on the Carmem Rubber Plantation. The standoff consisted of men, women and children coming together under the leadership of the unions to prevent the forest from being cleared. This practice would become emblematic of the rubber tappers' struggle. In the standoffs, they warned the laborers, who worked for the cattle ranchers, usually from outside Acre, that cutting down the forest meant the expulsion of families of workers, and invited the laborers to join the struggle, offering

them allotments and rubber roads to work on. Firmly, they drove the invaders out of their camps of destruction, preventing their work of cutting down the forest. The standoffs played a decisive role in consolidating the identity of the rubber tappers, and this form of resistance ended up drawing the attention of the whole of Brazil, especially after the murder of Wilson Pinheiro on July 21, 1980. The UDR (Democratic Rural Union) thought that by killing Chico Mendes they would be putting an end to his work. It made a big mistake, because Chico Mendes' legacy is part of a long-lasting revolution of humanity for the social reappropriation of nature, for which Chico's struggle left a definitive mark. In addition to the biological murder of Chico Mendes, other murders have continued to be carried out against his work. The first was his characterization as an ecologist. Chico was more than that, because he led the struggle for the forest as a struggle for the social reappropriation of nature. As Chico himself used to say, "the extractivist reserve is the rubber tappers' agrarian reform." Chico Mendes knew how to articulate the ecological struggle with the struggle for social justice, through democratic invention with the protagonism of those who, until now, have been subordinated by the hierarchically shaped social and power relations that oppress and exploit most of humanity and thus prevent its full creative potential from developing. Chico was able to foresee a more complex philosophy, by broadening the understanding of specific struggles with the general struggle against capitalism and for an egalitarian society, cherished by his communist ideology. In this way, Chico Mendes opened the door to what intellectuals like Boaventura de Sousa Santos and others will call a new kind of paradigm: ecosocialism. (Carlos Walter died on September 6, 2023. At his request, some of his ashes were scattered among the trees of the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve).



“Assassins linked to the UDR thought of silencing, with a bullet, this voice whose strength, like a poronga headlight, the lamp of the rubber tappers, continues to illuminate paths.”



Reprodução/Internet



DOM MOACYR GRECHI

I arrived in Acre in 1971, to take care of the Prelature of Acre and Purus, now the Diocese of Rio Branco, at a time when the reaction of the rubber tappers and squatters to stay on their land was beginning. I was born in Santa Catarina, but at the time I was the superior of the Servants of Mary religious order, based in São Paulo, and also the provincial responsible for Acre. When Bishop Giocondo died, the Pope appointed me to be the new bishop of the Prelature. I was lucky, because it was the people of Acre who taught me how to be a Christian, how to be a bishop and how to commit myself to the side of justice. These people I now consider to be my own family. Acre loves me very much and honors me with many accolades. There's a government institute named after me and a village – a people's place called Vila Dom Moacyr – where a funny story happens, because the bus sign in this village says only Dom Moacyr. So the people keep saying: "Where's Dom Moacyr? Is Dom Moacyr coming? Has Dom Moacyr passed?" And in the beginning, many people wondered whether it was the bishop or the bus that was taking a long time, coming or going. This is just one of the many stories of my friendship and learning with the people of Acre. Once, a group of mothers asked me to visit a rubber plantation near Rio Branco, Ipiranga, where the owner was being denounced for committing acts of violence against their children and husbands. The mothers and relatives came to my house three times to ask for help, and I never went. Until, on their third visit, one of the older men – a man in his 80s – looked at me and said: "Bishop Moacyr, you're the bishop, you're the authority, you know best, but I'm older. If I were you, I would have gone there to see if it was true or not." So as not to be a slacker, I went and that visit changed my life. In Rio Branco, I made it my mission to organize the CEBs throughout the Prelature. The CEBs were cells for evangelization, prayer and fraternity, but they were also where awareness was formed for union organization and, a little later, for the formation of the PT. Over time, everywhere in the Prelature there was a CEB. In Assis Brasil, the CEBs were so strong that it turned out to be the only place where Lula never



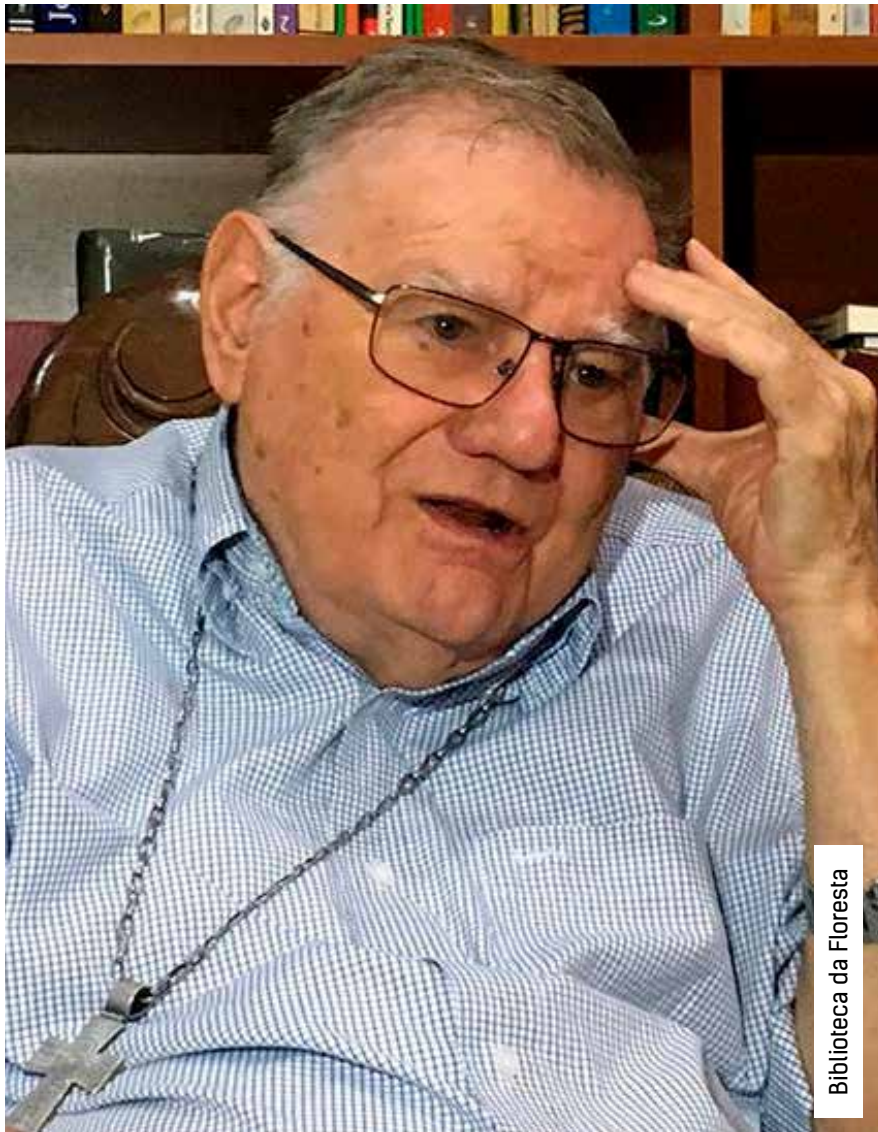
Revista Xapuri

lost an election. In difficult times, he lost all over Brazil, but in Assis Brasil Lula always won. As a result, the Catholic Church ended up being a kind of mother's womb for the gestation of an independent and fighting trade unionism, whose leaders later formed the PT. Some people said to me: "But, Dom Moacyr, you can't, you have to be a bishop for everyone. You can't be a PT bishop." I replied that I was only supporting generous people who exercised their Christian faith by fighting for peace and social justice. When João Maia arrived to found the unions, the people were already prepared. The meetings always took place in a church setting. The police were corrupt to the bone; the politicians were incapable; and the army was a bunch of people afraid of communism and subversion (most of them didn't know what that was, but they were always afraid). The violence had the total connivance of the authorities, the police were corrupt and sold out, and the army was terrified. João Maia is a person who cannot be forgotten: he was a brave man, who had the courage to organize the rubber tappers when Contag came to Acre to found the unions. He was a cheerful and playful ex-seminarian who liked to speak Latin with me. He always said to me: "Dom Moacyr, learn this: dialog is the key to survival in this land." He fought for independent trade unionism, but he never stopped talking to the governor, the police and the army. He formed excellent leaders and founded many unions. He was fearless. It was his creative idea to arrest the enforcers during the joint effort that the unions made in Boca do Acre, in Amazonas. Joining João Maia was Pedro Marques, a didactic lawyer who had a special way of teaching rubber tappers about the Land Statute and the Civil Code. I remember the day João Maia asked me to

"Chico Mendes began his struggle like every rubber tapper: fighting for possession in order to stay on the land. It was circumstances that made him such an exceptional leader. In addition to his ideological preparation, he had that natural way of speaking and getting along with everyone."

lend him a church hall to hold the founding assembly of the Rio Branco Rural Workers' Union. As I knew that many people would come – and, in fact, more than a thousand rubber tappers and squatters arrived – I ended up lending the Cathedral itself. Inside, there were the workers and, outside, the army armed with shields and machine guns, surrounding the workers as if they were surrounding bandits. As if the rubber tappers weren't just fighting with commitment and faith to change the course of things that affected their lives. It was a very tough time, with the army always trying to intimidate. We held a meeting at my house, of the CPT and CIMI, and the army tried to record it. A nun saw a tiny tape recorder in the window and it belonged to the army. As I was National President of the CPT – I spent eight years of the military dictatorship as president of the CPT – journalist Mino Carta wrote a note in the newspaper A República, recording the incident. Years later, the reports that I was marked for death were confirmed. One day, when I was very ill, Tufik Assmar, the owner of Rede Globo in Acre, sent for me and said: "Dom Moacyr, you're my friend, and I can't die without you knowing. Once a military officer visited me to inform me that they were preparing to kill you. I told him: 'No, no way.' He said that if they killed you, I'd tell the whole of Brazil." And to imagine that Globo started in my house, a very poor station. The World Cup was coming, everyone wanted to watch the games and Assmar, who was just starting out in the communications field, asked me to install his low-quality equipment in the bedroom of my house, because it was the highest point in the city. That was a time when Christians and non-Christians came together. At the Center for the Defense of Human Rights (CDDH) there was even an avowed





atheist, and there was Abraham Farhat, our Lhé, of Lebanese origin. In Xapuri there was Bacurau, a leprosy patient who had no hands or feet, totally dedicated. These people joined the rubber tappers and squatters to fight for the land. It was the people of the Church, Nilson Mourão – who later became very important because he linked faith with politics – Father Paulino and Father Pacífico, together with the communists and an INCRA lawyer called Juraci, who produced the Catechism of the Earth: a cheap and simple pamphlet, with just five questions and five answers, but which was the first instrument of resistance within the forest. Those who

couldn't read would nail it to the wall of their house and when a foreman came and said: "You have to leave, because this land now has another owner", the answer was always: "No sir, I'm not leaving. Look at my rights, which is written in the Catechism of the Earth". When I met Chico Mendes, he was a member of the CEBs, but without much religious fervor. He sometimes accompanied me on pastoral visits, but what he really wanted to talk about was politics and organization. From the first time I met him, it was clear that he had a certain education. Later he told me how he had been made literate and initiated into politics by a certain person who lived in the region. But as a trade unionist, he was unknown until he was elected secretary of the STR in Brasília. He only became the main leader after Wilson Pinheiro was murdered in 1980. There were three priests in Xapuri at the time: José, Otávio and Cláudio. Father José was always against him, but Fathers Otávio and Cláudio were his friends who favored his struggle, but he spoke equally to all three. Chico was the fruit of a moment of environmental sensitivity that the world was going through. In the beginning, neither Chico Mendes nor anyone else talked about defending the forest as a whole. In this evolution towards the ecological aspect, to bring the thinking of the rubber tappers to people outside the forest, Chico had the support of anthropologist Mary Allegratti. I didn't always agree with her, but to be fair I have to acknowledge that Mary contributed a lot to Chico Mendes becoming this symbol of peaceful struggle in defense of the Amazon, known throughout the world. And to think that Chico Mendes came to see me so many times, came to my house to say that he was about to die, that he felt very threatened and that he was sure he wasn't going to live. I used to joke with him and say: "No, don't die, Chico. These bastards don't have the guts to get you." But he started digging around and ended up finding evidence against the people who were threatening him. One day he came home with a writ of pre-trial detention for Darly Alves, the same man who later claimed to be the mastermind of his murder: "Dom Moacyr, who do we give this to?" I went with him to deliver the writ to the Federal Police who, instead of acting quickly, ended up taking a long time until the matter transpired – it reached Darly's ears – and shortly afterwards Chico was murdered. (Dom Moacyr said goodbye to this world on June 17, 2019, in Porto Velho, the capital of Rondônia).



Comité Chico Mendes



DOM PHILLIPS AND BRUNO PEREIRA

*"Wahanararai wahanararai, marinawah
kinadik, marinawah kinadik;
tabarinih hidya hidyanih,
hidja hidjanih."*

Chant in Katukina, language of the Kanamari

I'm José Bessa Freire and I'm wondering: Where is the indigenist Bruno Araújo Pereira, 41, from Paraíba by birth, Amazonian by adoption, murdered on June 5, 2022? The scene is paradisiacal. Surrounded by trees in the middle of the forest, he is chanting in Katukina, the Kanamari language. The camera captures him in profile, sitting on the ground on a carpet of leaves, tapping the tune with his left foot. He seems to be alone. He's not. He turns his face to the right and, now facing forward, flashes a cheerful smile, interacting with the indigenous people with whom he sings and who, outside the frame, are not shown in the video. We hear their voices accompanying the collective counter-song, in tune with the complicity built by sharing experiences of struggle. What do they sing in the video [of Enoch Taurepang] shown by André Trigueiro on a TV channel, which went viral? The words literally talk about the way the macaw feeds its chicks, an anthem in defense of the forest and native peoples. Bruno's hearty laugh demonstrates his way of showing a heartbreaking scene, provoking ambiguous feelings of light and shadow, hope and despair. The other side, the one that kills and doesn't sing, is not worth seeing or understanding. "When I saw Bruno's video I cried a lot," wrote singer-songwriter André Abujamra, author of a remix of the song, who expressed the feelings of all of us: cry, pray, air. I've seen the images a hundred times, mesmerized by the joy of the playful boy, who must have charmed his Beatriz

and his two children, aged 2 and 3, one of whom is the heir to his father's laughter, both photographed in a boat on the muddy river, on whose awning is written: "This river is my street". Where is British journalist Dominic Mark Phillips, 57, born in the county of Merseyside, but a Bahian like his Alessandra and an Amazonian like his friend Bruno, murdered on June 5, 2022? In love with the sacredness of the exuberant forest, the two sailed together since 2018 on the rivers of the Amazon, especially the Javari, their last home. A week before their farewell, Dom had just posted a video on Instagram inside a boat, with a simple, very Brazilian declaration of love that says everything about him and his partner in life and death: "Amazônia, sua linda! [Beautiful Amazonia!]" Their love for the region united them and linked them to the native peoples who have lived there for millennia and taught them "How to Save the Amazon", the title of the book Dom was writing, based on the experience he had gained from traveling around Brazil for 15 years, the last five in the Amazon region with Bruno. The journalist was loved by the indigenous peoples, as was Bruno, according to statements made by leaders of the Union of Indigenous Peoples of the Javari Valley (UNIVAJA).



DOROTHY STANG

The deaths of Chico Mendes, on December 22, 1988, in Xapuri, in the state of Acre; of Dorothy Stang, on February 12, 2005, in Anapu, in the state of Pará, and of Dom Philips and Bruno Pereira, on June 5, 2022, in Atalaia do Norte, in the state of Amazonas, by means of summary executions, ordered by the forces of latifundia and capital, who insist on liquidating what remains of the Amazon, show that the forest continues to be in danger and that those who defend the peoples who live in it continue to be marked for death. Data from the Report on Conflicts in the Countryside, by the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), show that in 2022 the number of murders linked to land disputes increased by around 30% compared to the previous year. There were 47 deaths in 2022, of which 18 were indigenous, compared to 35 in 2021. As in the days of Chico Mendes, in the rubber plantations of Acre, 180 actions by gunmen were recorded, an increase of 86% compared to previous years. People who support the cause of the Forest Peoples are also frequently killed. Arriving from Brazil in 1966, Dorothy Stang, a North American missionary, partner of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) and defender of rural workers, was murdered with six shots on a dirt road, 53 km from Anapu, on February 12, 2005. Sister Dorothy, as her companions called her, was responsible for setting up a Sustainable Development Project (PDS), linked to INCRA, in a settlement of landless workers. As is the case throughout the region, where landowners, loggers and land grabbers operate, sometimes hiring thugs and gunmen to end the lives of those who resist in defense of their territory, Dorothy lost her life to the greed of the latifundia at the age of 73. For the Landless Movement (MST), Sister Dorothy has become one of the greatest symbols of resistance, which since its origins has assiduously pursued the protection of all natural resources and forms of life. The CPT missionary's struggle was not in vain! Sister Dorothy: Present!



"I'm not going to run away or abandon the struggle of these farmers who are unprotected in the middle of the forest. They have a sacred right to a better life on land where they can live and produce with dignity, without devastation."

Dorothy Stang

ELIAS ROSENDO

In 2008, I wrote a cordel [traditional northeastern poem] about Chico Mendes' entire life, from the day he was born to the day he was killed in the dark of night in the backyard of his house in Xapuri. I tell of when we founded the STR in Brasília, me being elected president of the first workers' union created in that region, and Chico being elected to be my secretary. There, the first thing Chico asked me to buy was a typewriter, even though neither of us knew how to use it. I bought it, but soon gave up learning. Chico didn't. Chico pressed the keys until he learned to type on that machine. Then, some time later, he stopped by, and brought the machine to Xapuri. Today, I don't know where it is. I knew Chico from an early age, poor thing. At the age of seven or eight, the boy was already tapping rubber with his father; with his mother and brothers, after his father died. He wanted to go to Xapuri to study, and his mother couldn't let him. Then someone came along and taught him how to write, how to do math and how to think about politics. He and I in the Brasília Union, together with Wilson Pinheiro, saw the first threats, the first evictions, the first violence against the workers. At that time, I learned about the mistreatment of the workers by an army captain, who was a doctor in charge of the hospital in Brasília. Outraged, I reported the captain to the police and, since they were all one and the same, instead of changing the way the people were treated when they were ill, the captain told me that I was marked, that he was going to get me and that the police would do him a favor. I, who didn't have the boldness of Wilson Pinheiro, got out of there. I passed by the union, but I ran. Most of the time I was out of sight, in the bush. People used to say that I didn't show up because I was a partier, but what really happened to me was fear. Wilson Pinheiro, who was a brave and courageous guy, ended up taking over as president of the union in my place. I thought it was fair, because he was a confrontational guy, and I wasn't like that. He went fast, I went slower. I used to say to Wilson Pinheiro: "Take it easy, buddy, go slower. The way you're going, the bastards are going to get you."

He kept calling assemblies, organizing standoffs, making his point in the conflict. Wilson was a very good person, very nice. He bought two trucks and drove around the rubber plantations with them, helping his comrades with their needs. Before he was murdered, the enforcers put pressure on him and burned his trucks. Chico was threatened and, in order to survive, he ended up moving to Xapuri. When he arrived in Xapuri (by then he was already a well-liked man), he ended up being elected as an MDB councilman. But he didn't like the MDB. He really wanted to follow Lula and form the Workers' Party. In 1980, he went to São Paulo and there they founded the PT. After that, Chico returned to Acre to set up the PT. Chico Mendes arrived saying that everyone should join the PT, and we joined him. That's why I'm so fond of the PT. I'm in this party and I'm not leaving it. This was the party I joined alongside Chico Mendes and it's the party I'll die in. We started the PT in the 1980s, but the first election with a PT candidate only took place in '82. I was the candidate for deputy governor on Nilson Mourão's ticket for governor. Chico Mendes ran for state representative. We got almost no votes, because we had no money for campaigning and the party was still small. Chico died with this ideal of defending the forest. He was a guy who wasn't afraid to make a stand in the forest, but he also thought he had to leave Acre to take our proposals to the people. He got a bunch of rubber tappers together and went to Brasília to defend the Extractivist Reserves, which only came to fruition after his death. When he saw a chainsaw, he went crazy with sadness. He would say: "How sorry I am for this forest. How sorry I am for the rubber tapper who is going to be expelled, who will no longer have a rubber tree to cut, or a Brazil nut to harvest." He was very human. The love he had for the forest was also the love he had for the rubber tapper. After he went to the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in Brasília, he came back full of friends and full of influences. Every time I met with him, Chico said that we needed to do as Wilson Pinheiro did: with just one call, he would get two thousand people in the town square



for the Union's assemblies. I'd say: "That's right, Chico, but to get to that point again, we have to raise people's awareness little by little. We have to be more careful, nobody needs to lose their life. Nobody needs to go through what happened to Wilson Pinheiro's family." I've always been like that, slowing down. And the more he went out, the more he made friends outside Acre, the angrier the people from São Paulo got with him. Today I think Chico was a bit like Tiradentes, who died for freedom. I say this in my book: that Chico Mendes also gave his life for a cause: for the cause of the forest. Tiradentes was butchered for fighting for Brazil's independence from Portugal. Chico Mendes died with his body riddled with bullets for wanting to bring about the independence of the peoples of the extractivist Amazon, of the Peoples of the Forest. That's why I want to pay this tribute to him in the form of a cordel: by printing a booklet with him, very large on the cover, and me next to him, but on the back, in the background, because he really was the man of valor. (Elias Rosendo died on January 8, 2018, at the age of 93, in Rio Branco, Acre).

"Here in Acre, everyone knew about the threats against Chico Mendes. We knew they wanted to end his life, but he kept fighting. He wouldn't stop."



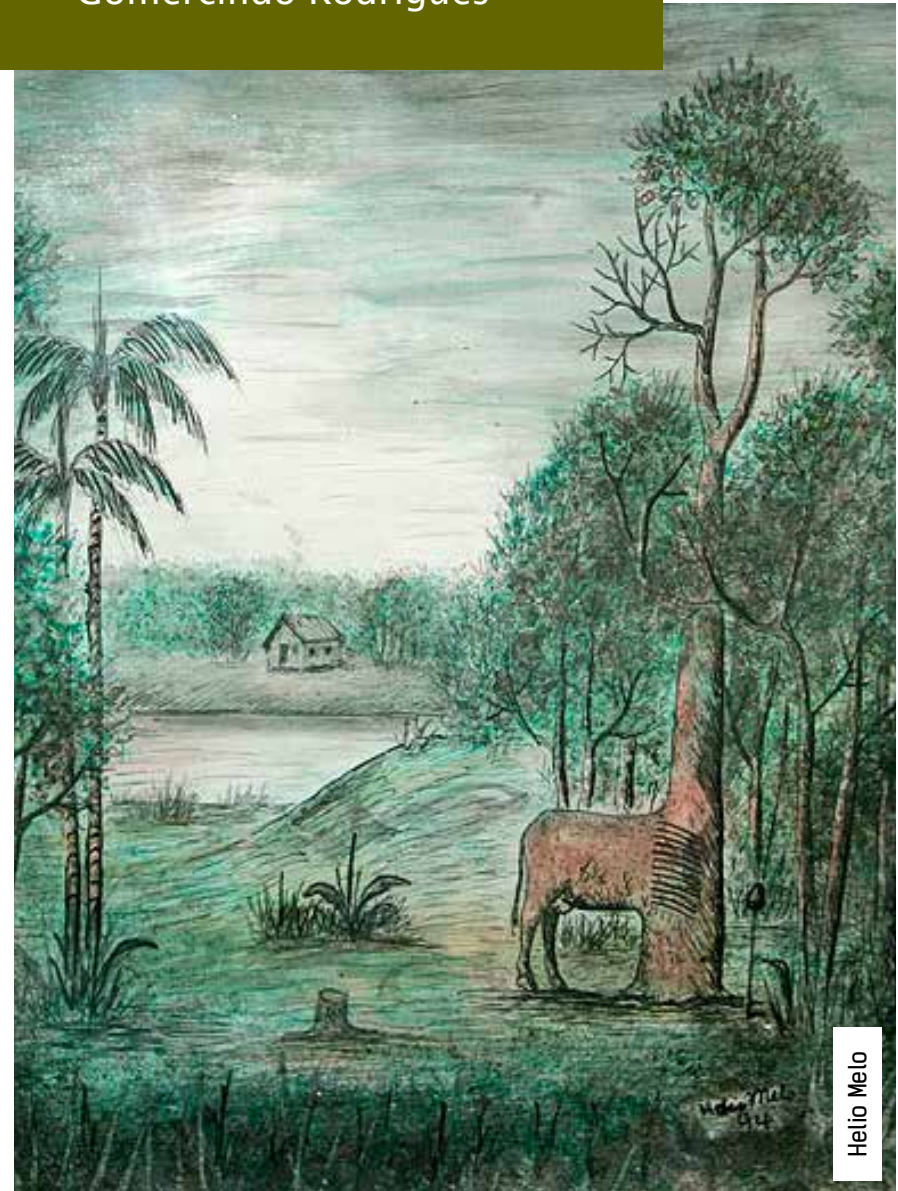
Marcos Jorge Dias

IVAIR HIGINO

Ivair Higino was a young companion of Chico Mendes, murdered on June 18, 1988, six months before Chico's assassination. He was only 26 years old when he was killed, practically on his doorstep, as he was going out to get milk for his little son, who was only 38 days old. Ivair was a militant of the CEBs (Grassroots Ecclesial Communities), born in Minas Gerais, who arrived in Acre in 1985 to take part in the occupation of an Extractivist Settlement Project (PAE) set up by INCRA in the Xapuri region. According to Angela Mendes, Chico's daughter, "Ivair Higino is an important figure in the history of the rubber tappers' struggle in Acre because he was one of those who paid with his life to defend the forest against the unbridled greed of the latifundia." It was only in 2008, 20 years after Ivair Higino's death, that the three men accused of the crime went on trial, but only one of them, Oloci Alves da Silva, Darly Alves' son, was sentenced to eight years in semi-open prison. This caused a great deal of outrage among family members and leaders of the social movement in Acre. At the time, the militant and great comrade Abrahim Farhat, who died on May 16, 2020, in a statement to the Acre News Agency, expressed the collective feeling of Ivair Higino's comrades: "Sometimes Brazilian justice is flawed, because it punishes the good and lets the bad go free. Ivair was fighting for the right to life, for the right to own land, for the right to raise his family in peace. He was a good citizen who fought on behalf of the underprivileged, and that's why he was killed. This court decision favors impunity, but it doesn't weaken the struggle, because [the struggle] belongs to all of us."

"Ivair Higino had no enemies or anything, he was killed in a silly, idiotic way, with the participation of Darly Alves' people, just as a way of creating terror in the region."

Gomercindo Rodrigues



Helio Melo

JORGE TERENA

Jorge Terena, friend, brother, father, comrade, relative, has entered the eternal field of the ancestors in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon. Teacher, philosopher and councilor, Jorge Terena was the creator, along with Ailton Krenak, Davi Yanomami, Marcos Terena and Paulinho Paiakan, of the historic Indigenous Rights Center (NDI), and contributed to the drafting of the chapter on Indigenous Rights in the Federal Constitution, our Magna Carta of 1988. As an advisor to José Lutzen-Berger on indigenous issues, his great relative Jorge Terena played an important strategic role in the demarcation of the Yanomami Indigenous Land in 1992. Jorge was intelligent, sober and always supportive. It's impressive to remember that he would often take out of his pocket what he sometimes didn't have, in order to help, rescue and shelter a comrade. Always affectionate and festive, he made his home a community center. On November 9, 2007, he was called to embark on the wings of the chimera, to travel the path to the stars. Like most of his indigenous brothers, he couldn't realize in time that his body was being taken over by the diseases of modernity, such as diabetes and cancer. We pay tribute here to one of the idealists of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance: an indigenous man from the Pantanal, an expert horseman who knew how to make and maintain friendships, tell stories and propose actions in favor of indigenous rights, taking advantage of his experience as a bilingual and bicultural citizen, taken to the United States at a young age, where he certainly learned new customs, experienced great adventures, without, however, ever forgetting his people, his roots and his traditions. (Jorge Terena died on November 9, 2007, in Manaus (AM), the victim of a stroke).



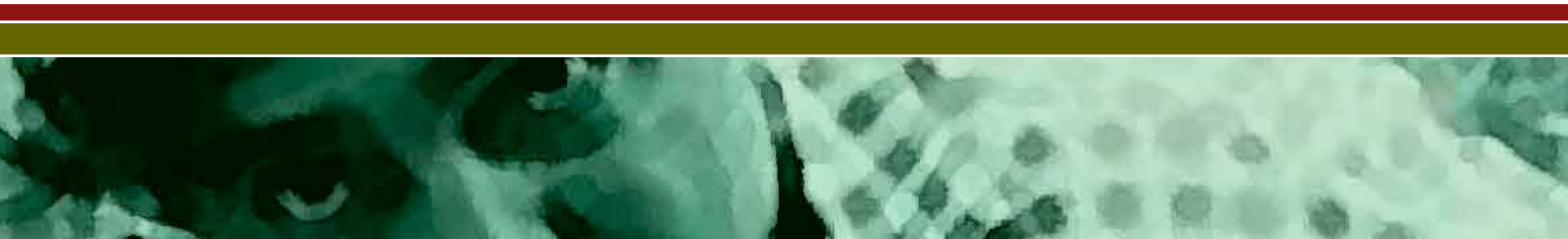
Arquivo Marcos Terena

*"Poí Caxé, Boinún!
Until another sun, brother!"*
Marcos Terena

PEDRO RAMOS DE SOUSA

I was born on November 27, 1940, on one of the many river islands in the estuary of the Amazon River, in the municipality of Afuá, in the state of Pará. I lived in Macapá for five years, studying. I returned to Afuá and stayed there until I was 23, learning from my mother how to cut rubber trees, process andiroba oil and gather açai fruit. In 1964, in Afuá, I was arrested by the military dictatorship. I escaped and went to Cayenne, in French Guiana, and only returned in 1986, as a small farmer, to work with subsistence crops, until the Mendes Júnior company appropriated the land we occupied, taking away the few conditions we had for survival. It was reeling from the damage caused by Mendes Júnior that I met Jorge and Neuza Zimmerman, who encouraged the farmers to organize themselves. They provided training in associations and logistical support in the process of founding the Central Society of Small Farmers of the Federal Territory of Amapá. With Soceap, we organized small farmers in three municipalities in our region. It was at one of these meetings that I met Chico Mendes. We exchanged views on the Amazon and on our organizations, and then we confided in each other about our duty to move the movement forward. We created the Extractivist Reserves, an agrarian reform model suited to our Amazonian reality, to counter the economic project of destruction of the Amazon by the state. Brazil's central power has taken various measures to support the exploitation of the forest: more than a thousand kilometers of highways have been opened or started; hydroelectric plants, transmission lines; railroads to transport minerals; ports for loading and unloading; modern communication systems; millions of hectares of occupied or unoccupied land at the disposal of big business. Mass media propaganda proved to be very useful for the purposes of the central state, which abused slogans such as: "Amazonia: the Brazilian Eldorado"; "A lot of land without people"; "Integrate so as not to surrender"; "This is a country that is going forward", which began to attract migrants because of the promise of ease in obtaining land, tax incentives, subsidies and the productive

infrastructure, drainage and basic inputs available. The Amazon's fate was sealed and it wasn't a good one. The damage immediately hit the extractivist economy, which saw its products banned from the market. By destroying the extractivist economy, human beings were deprived of their protection, taking away the only source of income that ensured the minimum supply of their basic needs, contrary to the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Human Person, to which Brazil is a signatory. This so-called progress has sharpened widespread conflicts over land disputes. Latifundia and capital, in tandem, wielded power against traditional peoples and communities, Indians and extractivists. For the latifundia, the Peoples of the Forest should be left to their own devices, ignored by the state. The state's omission resulted in conflicts and frequent murders of peasants, religious leaders and lawyers. This was how the expulsion of waves of peasants from the countryside to the outskirts of the cities was consolidated. The next step was the disintegration of families as hunger drove women into prostitution and men into crime. This scenario took over Chico Mendes' thoughts, and mine too, in the 1980s. Our primary and peaceful weapon in the fight against deforestation were the standoffs, where we would place a single row of men, women and children around a certain perimeter of forest in front of the laborers and enforcers on the day set by the latifundia for felling [forest]. Our maturing reflections stimulated the creation of an organization dedicated to forest extraction issues. Led by the rubber tappers, the debate spread from Acre to Rondônia, Amazonas and Amapá, with Amapá being absent from the act creating the National Council of Rubber Tappers in October 1985 in Brasília. The first concrete action by the Brazilian state aimed at allocating land to local traditional communities was with the recognition of the legal figure of the Extractivist Settlement Project (PAE) modality, through Incra Ordinance 627, of July 30, 1987. From this INCRA decree onwards, the particular natural and cultural issues of traditional Amazonian communities began to be recognized and respected by federal government bodies



and, in the processes of recognizing the reality of the Peoples of the Forest, there began to be a concern with environmental balance, with rationalizing the use of natural resources, with preserving the environment and with respecting traditional, extractivist and non-extractivist populations. We didn't expect Chico Mendes to be assassinated. We knew about the threats and what it meant for the movement to keep Chico alive. There was a decision by civil society and advisors to remove Chico from Xapuri, but he didn't want to leave, he wanted to stay. The perpetrators of that death continue to kill, because it's as if the country cultivates impunity. In the case of Chico Mendes, only the person who fired the gun and only one of the perpetrators were tried and convicted. The presence of reporters was a kind of guarantee that the murderer would be arrested and tried, and highlighted the prestige that Chico's ideas, which are our ideas, have gained in Brazil and around the world. After Chico's death, we reflected a lot on our purposes, which were translated into the agrarian dimension and land regularization, maintaining the culture of traditional communities and production with good management, strengthening organizations, breaking the isolation of the CNS and broadening alliances to strengthen the struggle. We maintained the Peoples of the Forest Alliance Meeting that Chico was organizing when he died. From that meeting, in March 1989, we decided to make feasible the creation, implementation and dissemination of Extractivist Reservist, a major banner defended by Chico with great fervor, just as he defended life, fighting any kind of aggression and saying that if his death served to advance the achievements [of the struggle], he would not be afraid to face it.



"The day Chico Mendes was murdered became the day when the social movements of the Amazon wept. We felt, at the same time, feelings of hatred, anger, revenge, pain and impotence, not only in the face of Chico's death, but also in the face of the injustice of the many other murders of our leaders in the Amazon and throughout Brazil."



LETTER TO BROTHER CHICO MENDES

Brother Chico, your name is now a symbol of the struggle of rubber tappers and environmentalists; it is a symbol of sustainable development and ecological correctness. Your name is now great and respected by all those people who want an economic system without the evils of environmental depredation and contamination of the soil, water and air. After you died, Brother Chico, your ideal and your name helped to create the first four Extractivist Reserves, and many others followed, improving quality of life for the people of the forest, who were the main reason for your struggle. Brother Chico, Eco-92 was held in Brazil, where the Earth Charter was launched, and then Rio+20, and since then Brazil has continued to take part in many world conferences and sign agreements and treaties, including the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. Brother Chico, in 2002 our dear Lula was elected president of Brazil, and was re-elected in 2006. In 2010, Dilma was elected, who was also re-elected in 2014, but was ousted in 2016 by a coup organized by the Parliament with the judiciary and the media; now, brother Chico, she is president of a bank called BRICS and has gone to live in China. After that, they imprisoned our Lula for 580 days so that he wouldn't win the 2018 elections, an un-namable genocidist ended up being elected who tried to end our Movement, but fortunately he lost the 2022 elections, and can you believe Lula is back again, in 2023, in a government of unity and reconstruction, brother Chico? Brother Chico, Lula and Dilma made very good governments at the wholesale level, but at the retail level they owed us. And the worst thing is that for now we won't be able to settle this debt, because the government that came in after overthrowing Dilma immediately tried to end our achievements in family farming and has been trying to shut down indigenous programs. Brother Chico, the export monoculture latifundia continue to grab our land and take possession of our territories. Deforestation, environmental degradation and the contamination of our waters remain serious. We're missing you here, brother Chico, to talk to the powerful who

continue to dominate our country from their offices in Brasília. Brother Chico, as for me, I'm in a bit of a bind, but I'm still rooting for the success of the CNS, which we created together and which, in order to include the new partners, has changed its name to the National Council of Extractivist Populations, but retains our old acronym CNS. Brother Chico, it's been 35 years and everyone misses you very much. So, brother Chico, see you again! (Pedro Ramos, who became known as the philosopher of the extractivist movement, died on December 11, 2023, in his home state of Amapá).

Pedro Ramos de Sousa





Miranda Smith



RAIMUNDA GOMES DA SILVA

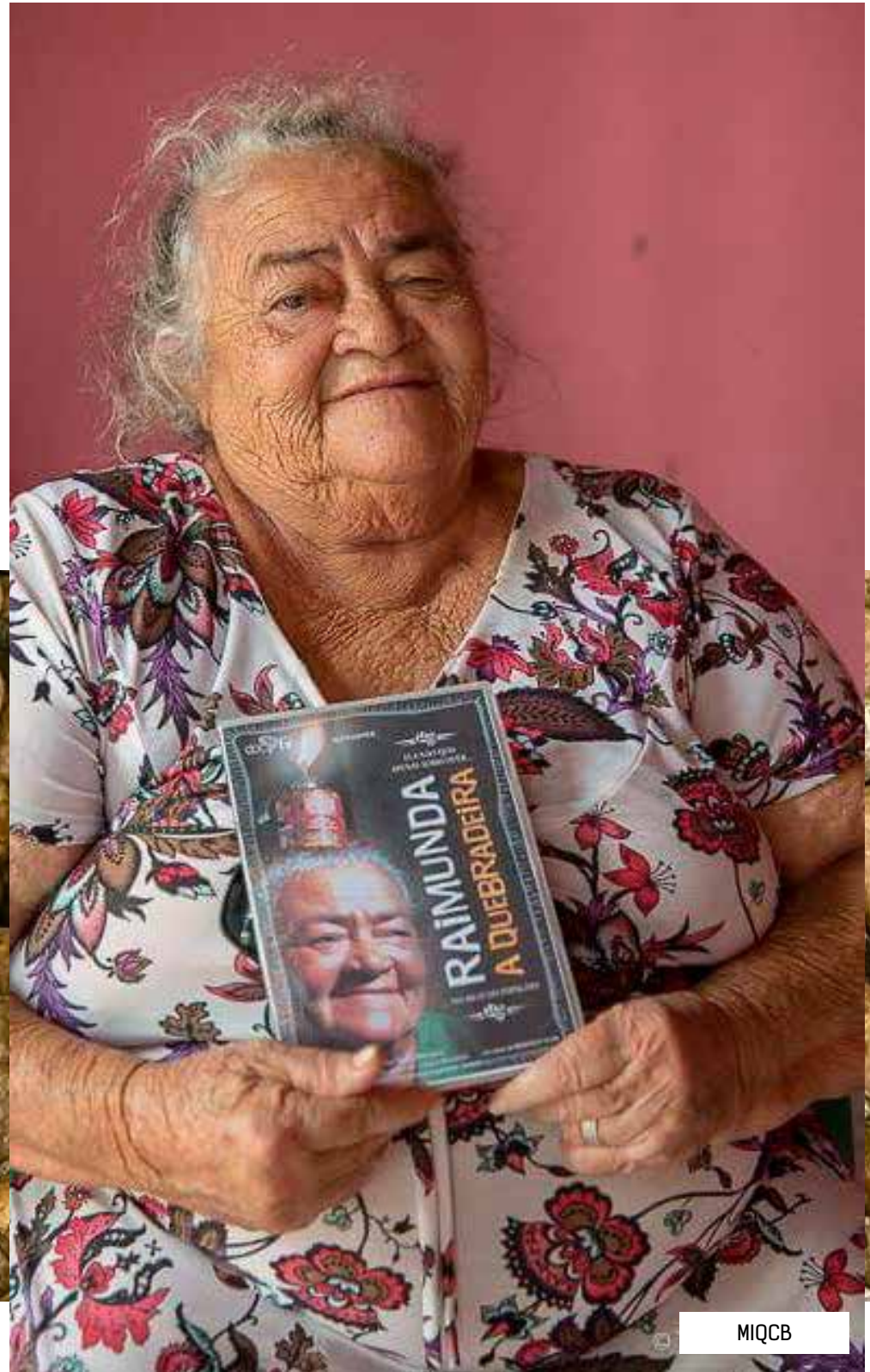
RAIMUNDA OF THE COCONUTS

My story is the story of the many women in the struggle who resisted in the Amazon together with Chico Mendes, Father Josimo [Tavares] and so many other leaders of the Peoples of the Forest. It's been a long time since I arrived here in Bico do Papagaio, in this municipality of São Miguel, which used to be Goiás and is now Tocantins. I grew up in Bacabal, in Maranhão, where from a very young age I was already active in social movements with Catholic Church communities. It was the same here, I continued to work with social movements and the Church. When I arrived in São Miguel, the locals said that it was a quiet area, and it was, until the 60s. Then came the opening of the Belém-Brasília highway and along came the landowners, who began to grab land and register possessions with notaries. And after registering a possession that wasn't theirs, which is what we call land grabbing, they came with their thugs and evicted the real squatters from their homes and their land. So the working people were evicted, they were left without fields and without homes, even though they had lived on their fields for many, many years. The violence was great, the workers were defenseless; here there was no law, here the Land Statute didn't apply. In order to defend our people, we decided to set up a Rural Workers' Union, so that the people of our region would have a place to turn to. Where I came from, I had experienced family farming, with a lot of working together and exchanging work days; there we never paid employees, we lived on the basis of solidarity. It was the same here, we got together with the poorest, with the people from the villages and the quilombolas. Nobody was rich, but nobody went hungry or walked around naked. In 1997, tired of the threats and violence when we went to collect coconuts in the babassu groves, we women decided to fight for the Free Babassu Law, so that we could have free access to the babassu forests from which we make our living. We are winning. Since then, we have a municipal law in São

Miguel, and we have also passed a state law in Tocantins [Law No. 9.159/2008]. Now the government has yet to approve the Federal Law, but that law is already in Brasília and one of these days it will be approved too." [Unanimously, the Environment Committee of the Chamber of Representatives approved Bill 231/2007, creating the Free Babassu Law. The bill, authored by congressman Domingos Dutra (PT/MA), prohibits the felling of babassu palm trees in the states of Maranhão, Piauí, Tocantins, Pará, Goiás and Mato Grosso, and creates rules for the exploitation of the species]. People here say that babassu is our tree of life, because we get everything from it: from the fruit we get the nut that is now beginning to have some value on the market; from the nut we make oil and soap, which we use in our homes or sell to generate income; from the stem we make boards to build our houses; with the leaves, we cover our ranches, which stay cool all year round. And even if we didn't have all that, the babassu is a symbol for us, it is the forest that is always reborn from where everything has already been taken. It's a palm that always reacts, it's always multiplying new daughters, new palms. Babassu is everything to us, it brings rain, it brings shade, it improves the climate, it improves the air we breathe. That's why babassu can't be extinguished. This fight is important because babassu is not just a symbol, it's nature's forest, where so much has already been taken, and it always reacts, it's always multiplying new palm trees. Babassu is everything to us, it's part of our life, it improves the air we breathe, the rainfall, the climate. It can't be extinguished. A cousin of mine gave me a song to sing at meetings: "Ah, don't cut down this palm tree, ah, don't devour the palm grove, you can't cut it down, we need to preserve, we need to preserve natural wealth". It became our anthem! [Dona Raimunda died at home, in the village of Sete Barracas, in the municipality of São Miguel do Tocantins, on 7/11/2018, at the age of 78].



"After 1988, we always compare Josimo's story with that of Chico Mendes. Both were killed by the latifundia, both died fighting for the Peoples of the Forest."



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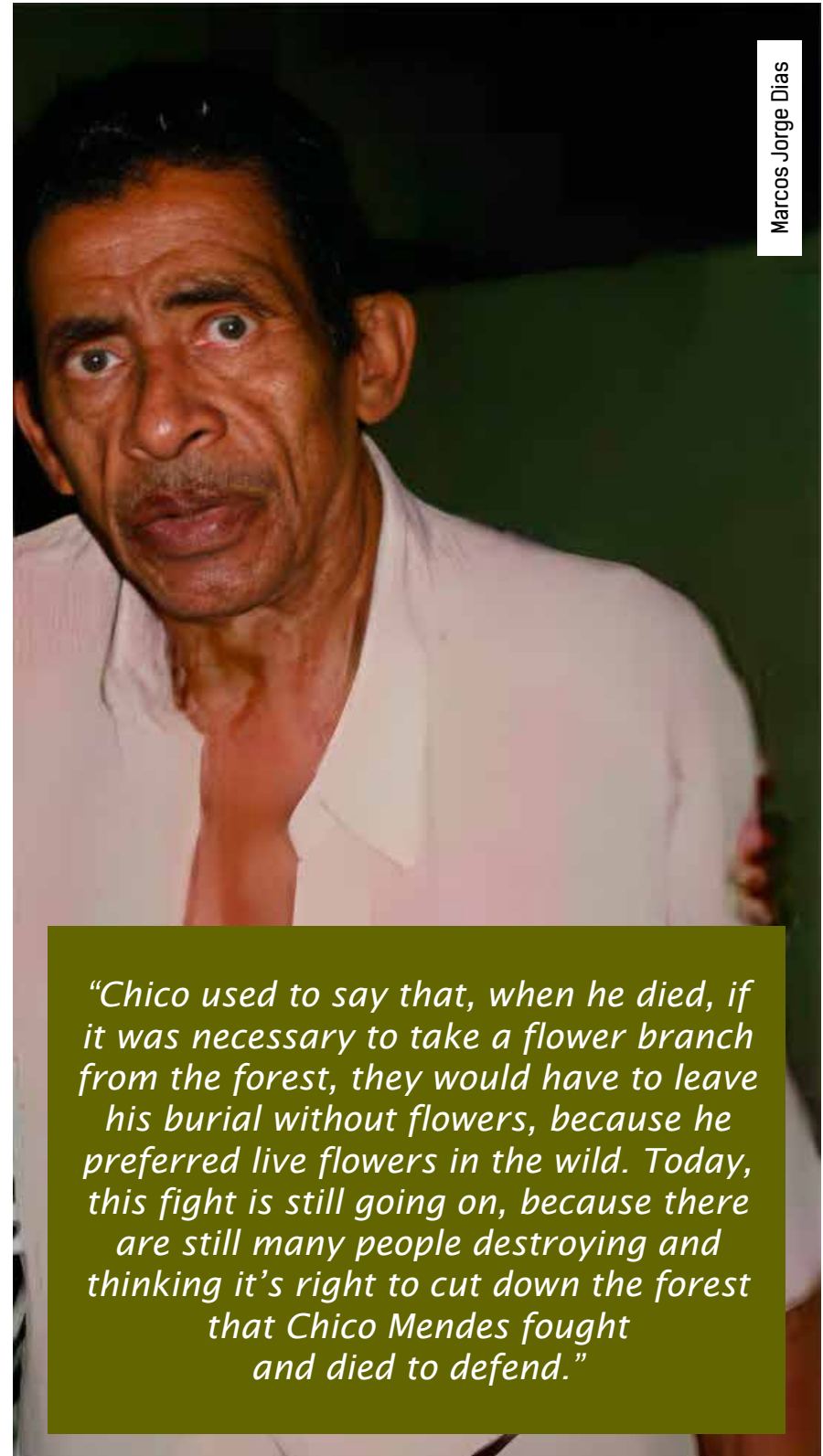
SABÁ ARAÚJO



Helio Melo

I don't even like to remember the day I heard about Chico Mendes' death. We were both members of the Xapuri Trade Union. Chico was the president; I was the treasurer. My name is Sebastião Gomes de Araújo, but every Sebastião here in Acre is Sabá, so everyone calls me Sabá. I came to Acre from the southwest of the state of Pará, near the Kayapó land, where there are also many rubber trees, but the Kayapó wouldn't let us cut rubber trees on their land. I was in Belém with my stepfather, going to Maranhão in search of work. That's when a rubber tapper from Acre showed up, with all that nice talk, saying that in the Acre rubber plantations you could make a lot of money, that you could come back rich in two years. My stepfather thought we should try life here in Acre, just for two years, and we came here. Today I'm more from Acre than from Pará. My wife is from Acre, my children are from Acre, my whole life is here in Acre. Well, here in Acre, which, as we know, is the land of Chico Mendes, a man who will never have another like him, a person who loved the forest too much. What I remember most about Chico Mendes was the way he treated people. With him there was no such thing as rich or poor, everyone was treated the same. In fact, he treated the poor much more highly. Chico was the man who took the spoon out of his mouth to give it to someone else, who didn't know how to say no to another human being. Once we were there at the Union, and an old lady came in wanting to talk to Chico Mendes. I said: "Chico is having coffee." And she said: "I really need to talk to him." I called Chico. He came in with a glass of sweet, thin coffee and a piece of bread in his hand. The woman immediately said: "Chico, I have nowhere to put water to drink, I had a pot, they knocked over my pot and it broke." Chico went into the union, opened the room where his things were, took out a filter and brought it to the old woman. His wife said: "Chico, but that's our filter!" He said: "Ilza, we'll get another filter. This lady needs it much more than we do. Before she leaves here for our house, we'll get another filter." Chico decided to build

the union's first headquarters there, where the union still stands today. The land belonged to the church, and Júlio Barbosa, Sabá Marinho and I went there to talk to Bishop Moacyr. We talked to the bishop, Abraham Farhat helped a lot, and we managed to build this beautiful building that the Union has today. One afternoon, Chico came home from the rubber plantation and asked me: "Boy, how's business?" The business was the money, and I said that it was going badly, that nothing was expected to come in. He said: "I'll call Abraham." He called, the two of them talked, and Chico said: "Boy, I got back from the rubber plantation today and business is bad here, we're in a bit of a rut..." They talked some more, Chico hung up the phone and said to me: "Boy, Abraham is sending 600 tomorrow through the 11 o'clock bus driver." It was like that, Chico Mendes had no greed for money, what was his was ours, it was never his. Chico was a very cheerful person. There was no sadness with him. No matter how many problems he had, he always said: "Boy, one way or another we're going to solve this." And the most incredible thing is that when he was invited to that meeting (in 1987) in the United States, he flew from Acre without knowing any English. Someone was waiting on the other side, but when he arrived at Immigration he was taken to a narrow room for a long time, where they asked a lot of questions. Chico couldn't remember to show his invitation. An interpreter appeared who spoke Spanish, they asked if he was carrying dollars, he said no, that he was only carrying a few cruzeiros, and the people asked more questions. Until he remembered the invitation, showed it to them, and then everything changed, they said everything was fine, and he entered the United States. Chico told us about it laughing, as if it had been nothing, as if it had been just another walk through a closed varadouro [rubber road], where to get through you had to first cut the vines.

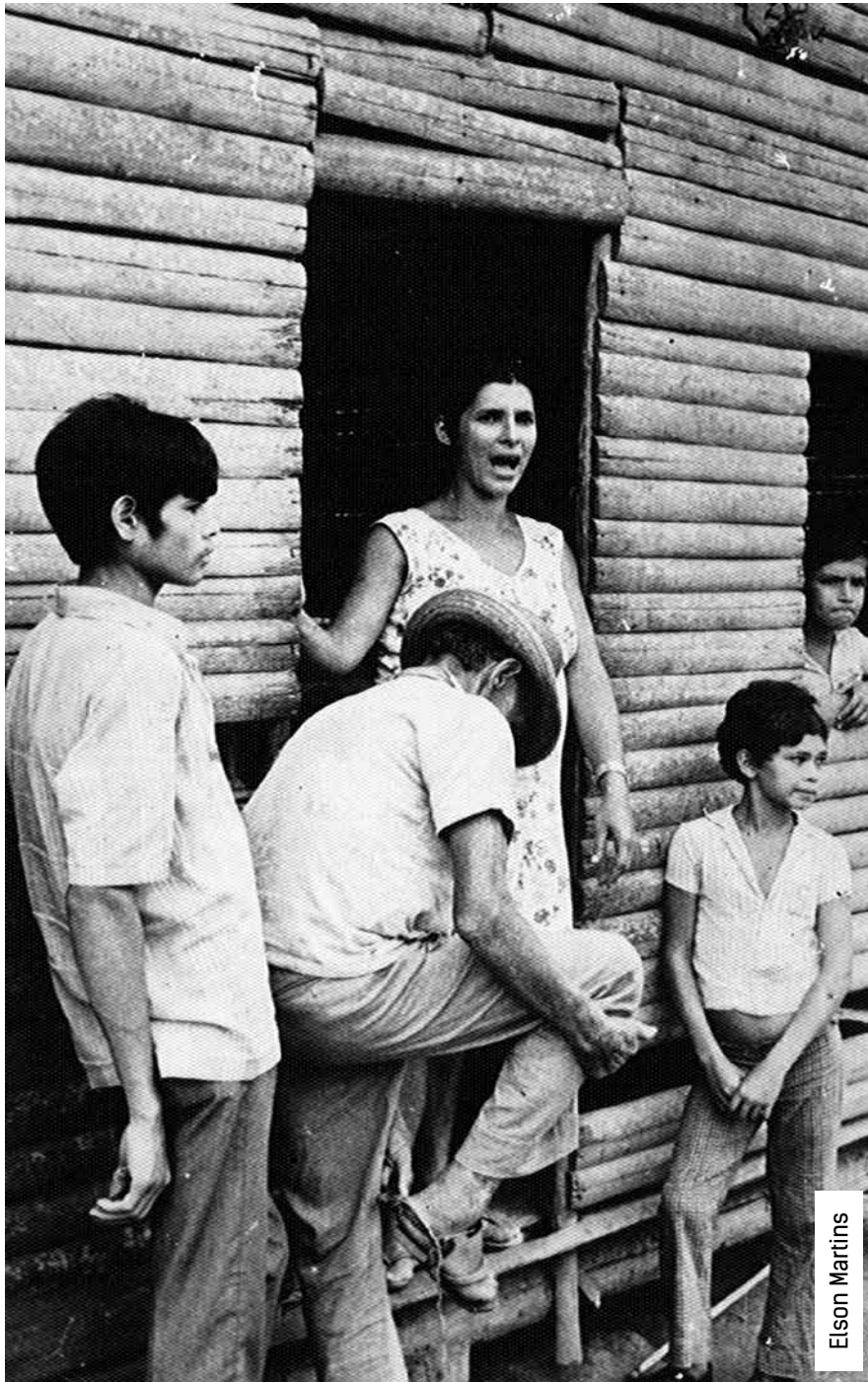


Marcos Jorge Dias

"Chico used to say that, when he died, if it was necessary to take a flower branch from the forest, they would have to leave his burial without flowers, because he preferred live flowers in the wild. Today, this fight is still going on, because there are still many people destroying and thinking it's right to cut down the forest that Chico Mendes fought and died to defend."



VALDIZA ALENCAR



The Acre resistance against the groups from the Center-South who came to cattle-raid Acre had a rubber tapper woman as its protagonist: Valdiza Alencar de Souza, who became known as the “Woman of the Union” because she took up the fight, a position usually reserved for men, to confront the foremen, enforcers and chainsaw operators who threatened the rubber tapper families of the region. She was born on the Sacado rubber plantation and lived in her allotment at kilometer 71 of the highway (BR-17), between Brasília and Assis Brasil, where the foreman Horácio visited her, warning her not to make any improvements to the property, because the rubber plantation had a new owner and she would have to leave the land without the right to compensation. Valdiza was a brave and determined woman, she had a son and a daughter when she was still young, her husband had become physically disabled, so she took care of everything: the garden, the small farms, hunting and fishing, rubber production and collecting chestnuts. Her energy was remarkable, ready to show solidarity, to help her friends, to resolve uncomfortable situations in the city. When he threatened her, the foreman didn’t know who he was dealing with. “I’m going to fight even if the blood gets to the middle of my shin,” she said, in a way that no one could doubt. Now, Mrs. Valdiza liked to listen to the radio to find out what was happening far away! She heard the news about Contag being set up in Rio Branco, and about “a certain doctor João Maia”, a delegate of the organization, who was going to set up rural workers’ unions throughout the state, so that they could fight for their legal rights. Without wasting any time, she mounted her mare and set off into the forest, calling on rubber tappers to go to the capital to “look for this man”. She couldn’t find courageous people [to go with her]. The families were in disbelief that they could find help from politicians and authorities. Many were leaving for the urban centers or Bolivia. The weather in December was very rainy, the BR-317 highway was still unpaved and its slopes were steep and muddy. It could have been better in a group, but Valdiza

Elson Martins

walked alone 71 kilometers to Brasiléia, then took a bus to Rio Branco and talked to João Maia. The Contag delegate was an educated man, had lived in the kibbutzes in Israel, had worked with the famous Peasant Leagues in Pernambuco, and knew how to get through to distressed workers. He always asked for some crushed tobacco and a corn cob leaf to roll a cigarette, and made a point of sitting on the floor of the house, legs crossed over the paxiúba bench, to smoke his cigarette. From there, the conversation flowed freely. A historic meeting was arranged at Valdiza Alencar's house. João Maia – in the company of Contag's lawyer, Pedro Marques da Cunha Neto and this reporter, Elson Martins – hired a four-wheel drive van to tackle the muddy slopes of the varadouros in the Acre Valley; the driver's nickname was "Spanish", who showed up smelling of alcohol. As a precaution, at each slope the passengers got out of the vehicle and skated in the mud, while the driver spun around. The group arrived wet and dirty at the meeting place, where Mrs. Valdiza, surrounded by men and women from the forest, was beaming. Lawyer Pedro Marques set the tone for the speeches, joking with those who seemed distracted: "Put a little green guava in one of your ears, so that what I'm about to say doesn't go in one ear and out the other!" Everyone laughed! Everyone laughed! João Maia and Pedro Marques' recommendation was based on two documents – the Land Statute and the Civil Code – just one item from each. After a year and a day working on the land, the worker was considered a squatter and could no longer be evicted; in the event of a threat to his family, the worker could react with a gun, and the lawyer (in this case Pedro Marques) would have elements to defend him.

"Dona Valdiza, who became known as the 'Woman of the Union', expressed enormous joy when, in December 1975, João Maia founded the STR Union of Brasiléia, 'to strengthen the resistance of the rubber tappers of Acre and all the peoples of the Amazon!'"
Elson Martins

On December 21, 1975, the strongest and most fearless of the eight unions created by Contag, the STR of Brasiléia, was born in the courtyard of Valdiza's house, to the great joy of the rubber tappers. Elias Rosendo, who visited rubber plantation after rubber plantation taking photos for their identity cards and charging for lunch and lodging, was chosen president. But he was soon replaced by Wilson Pinheiro, who organized the first "Standoff" on the Carmem rubber plantation in March 1976. Chico Mendes was chosen secretary and Valdiza Alencar de Souza union delegate. In September 1979, the rubber tappers demonstrated

their strength by holding a "Joint Effort against the Enforcers" on the BR-317 road to Boca do Acre, which brought together 300 union members to expel 12 armed enforcers and 45 chainsaw operators who were making life hell for the squatters. The event aroused the anger of ranchers, land grabbers and rubber barons, who ended up killing Wilson Pinheiro. Ten years later, Chico Mendes died at home, also from being shot in the chest. At that time (1980), the "Woman of the Union" had separated from her husband and moved with her children to the city of Rio Branco, joining the families expelled from the forest with whom she created new forms

of struggle. Her symbol remained in the forest, referenced by other women. Today, many women are active in the unions, accompanied by the press (especially Varadouro, an alternative newspaper that stood by the workers during the dictatorship), associations, national and international NGOs and other organizations. Now, we need to save the Extractivist Reserves (Resex) and the environment, legacies left by Wilson and Chico, with the courage to carry out new standoffs, if necessary.



WILSON PINHEIRO

I'm Ambrósio, son of Wilson Pinheiro. I was born in Rondônia, but from an early age I came with my father and my family to the rubber plantations of Brasiléia, where my father, who worked in mining in Rondônia, became a rubber tapper. I remember my father being in the union since 1975. At that time, he stopped cutting rubber to dedicate himself as President of the STR in Brasiléia. I also remember him as the founder of the PT, shortly before his assassination on July 21, 1980. My father used to go around all the allotments explaining from house to house the importance of the Union and the need to create the Workers' Party. It was there that he started as a councilman and became president. In the PT, unfortunately, he didn't even have the opportunity to see Lula in Acre. The first time Lula came to the state was during his 7th day mass. Around that time the persecution of the rubber tappers began, with the landowners wanting to expel them. My father was there, in the struggle, trying to stop them. Threats were made by word of mouth and even by letter. My father was undeterred and told us that he would be happy to die fighting with his comrades. He would arrive at the rubber plantations with a truck he had, loaded with goods. He distributed these goods to the rubber tappers in an attempt to make them more independent from their bosses. Those who could pay, paid. Those who couldn't, kept the merchandise and paid when they could or, if they couldn't, they didn't pay. The death threats continued. On one occasion, a Paraguayan was commissioned to kill my father with a .38 revolver bought by Nílão [Nilo Sérgio, the probable mastermind of Wilson Pinheiro's murder]. The Paraguayan called my father in for coffee and opened up to him. The Paraguayan gave him the revolver as a present, saying it was for him to defend himself on his wanderings through the forest. My

"My father fell over the union table. His blood splattered all over the table. The next day, I found the shell casings from the three bullets that silenced my father forever, next to that strip of nearly dried blood that had dripped all over the table."

father thanked him and refused. He had never carried a gun. His weapon was a very small knife, useful in his daily life as a rubber tapper. My father's struggle was strong, but peaceful. Even though he received written threats, he never stopped leaving the house and spending time with his companions. It was then, on July 21, at 8pm, that his life was ended. My father stopped watching the soap opera he was watching, went down to dinner and, as he was returning to the living room, he saw a bench had been rammed through. He turned around and was shot. One in the groin, one in the arm and one in the back of the head. My father's life was cut short by the oppression and tyranny of the landowners. After my father died, his struggle continued with Chico Mendes and the many comrades he left behind here in Acre. Chico learned a lot from my father. The two of them founded the PT here in Xapuri and throughout Acre. They organized unions and walked together through the rubber plantations organizing the communities. They had the same goals, but they were different people. My father liked to hold meetings with lots of people, but he was very quiet in person. Chico, on the other hand, liked to talk one-to-one, house-to-house. He was more cheerful.

But they were both afraid of the same thing: the secrets of the forest. I remember one time my father and I went out hunting. We walked for a while and heard a crazy noise: it sounded like a scream, like laughter, like crying. We sicced our little dog and it came back with its tail between its legs, as if to say it couldn't do anything. My father thought it was a jaguar. He walked a little further, carefully, and the noise didn't stop. Finally, he decided to see what it was. My father got closer, and closer, and he couldn't find the jaguar. That's when he realized that all that noise was just a couple of tortoises getting it on.







Elson Martins



RESISTANCE





Miranda Smith

Our struggle is a bit of a long story. It began with the whole movement of the standoffs for the defense of the forest, especially in 1976. At that time, we were at our peak, at the fiercest moment, the most difficult moment, the most desperate moment that has ever occurred in Acre. When the ranchers started arriving in the 1970s, the rubber tappers were expelled en masse. They had their shacks burnt down, their houses... Suddenly, the enforcers surrounded them and set fire to the shacks. On the Albráçia Rubber Plantation, in '72, there were nine gunmen. The place had been bought by a man from São Paulo called Vilela, who expelled all the rubber tappers from the area with bullets. They wanted to expel the rubber tappers from the rubber plantations. They wanted to destroy the forest and clear it for cattle. They managed to destroy the forest, remove the rubber tappers, remove the rubber and Brazil nut trees, the riches that exist inside in exchange for cattle, to put cattle inside. In other words, replacing the man in the forest with the ox. Bordon then bought a large area on the Xapuri River. Bordon expelled them en masse and set fire to rubber tappers' shacks, burning rubber tappers' wives to death. The other ranchers also reacted [in the same way] and the whole region of Xapuri was bombed. At that point, more than 70% of the rubber tappers were expelled from the region and sent to Bolivia. Others went to the outskirts of Rio Branco. It was a moment of great despair. The police force was already on top of us, driven by the landowners' money. In that period, between 70 and 76, they bought 6 million hectares of land in the region. They didn't take a penny [out of their pockets], they didn't sell an ox in the south to buy these lands. Bordon and other farmers who came from the south of the country. These lands were all bought with the support of tax incentives from the Superintendence for the Development of the Amazon. The government opened its legs to these landowners and, in those six years, 180,000 rubber trees were destroyed in our region; 80,000 Brazil nut trees, and, among hardwood and cedar, the abio, the cumaru-de cheiro, the cumaru-ferro, the amarelão. More



than 1.2 million trees were destroyed, apart from the medium-sized trees that were growing. During this period, various fronts of struggle were organized. In 79, the largest movement broke out in Acre and reached the municipality of Boca do Acre, in the state of Amazonas. A group of rubber tappers were threatened by thugs and gunmen. Here we sent 300 men to surround the gunmen's camp. We took all their weapons. I wasn't there, but my cousin Raimundo was. This was the first strong movement to break out and grow in Acre, led by comrade Wilson de Souza Pinheiro, president of the Brasília Union. This action had strong repercussions, as Wilson Pinheiro was the main figure at the time: in the standoffs all over Acre. In June, all the landowners in the region met and decided to kill Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes, who at that time was beginning to grow as a leader. On July 21, 1980, I was at a union assembly in the Juruá Valley, on the other side of Acre. Wilson Pinheiro was at the union headquarters, watching television with his comrades. That night, one gunman went to Brasília and another to Xapuri. The one who arrived here in Xapuri wasted his trip because I wasn't there. The one from Brasília shot Wilson Pinheiro. There, in the corner of the house, he fired three shots and killed Wilson. Tactically, at that moment, the landowners thought that the Brasília Union, despite being strong, was centralized around one leader - Wilson Pinheiro - and that he should therefore die. By killing Wilson, the Union would back down and they would be able to achieve their main asset: domination over the land. (Testimony given to Lucélia Santos, in May 1988).

Chico Mendes



JÚLIO BARBOSA DE AQUINO

Amazonia. There was the rubber cycle at the beginning of the century and then there was another, from 1945 until 1966, which was the second rubber cycle. In 1966, the Rubber Credit Bank went bankrupt, at which point all the rubber plantations went bankrupt. Without rubber barons, the rubber tappers had to survive on their own. That's when our society of Forest Peoples began to emerge. That was the moment I experienced with Chico Mendes and the leaders of the Rubber Tappers' Movement. From the 1970s onwards, the rubber plantations almost all ceased to exist and were replaced by sheds, and later by sledgehammers. At that time, the rubber policy in Brazil ceased to exist. The rubber plantation was no longer of any importance to the Brazilian economy. It became more economical to buy rubber from abroad. When the rubber plantations went bankrupt, our region's doors were opened to the sale of rubber plantations to large landowners in the south and southeast of the country. And the people from São Paulo, who we all called Paulistas, came. We began to face the challenge of understanding that the rubber plantations were finished and that the shed and warehouse had closed. We were left at the mercy of the rubber sellers, buying rubber at a very low price. At the beginning of the 1970s, the people from São Paulo started buying up the rubber plantations in the Amazon. The issue of rubber plantations was accompanied by the opening of roads in the Amazon, such as the BR-364. There was a political project linked to Calha Norte, to build a whole ring of roads. This kind of action aroused the curiosity of Acre's rubber tappers. It was the time of the big standoffs. The first took place in Acre in 1974 and the second in 1975, both before the first union was created in the state. When the standoff at kilometer 45 of

the Boca do Acre road happened, the biggest in the state's history [which had the most repercussions at the time], the unions were just getting started. There was the one in Sena Madureira, Rio Branco and Brasília. At the time, the Boca do Acre region had a landowner who formed a band of very well-armed gunmen. Their mission was to expel all the rubber tappers from the region and also invade the lands of the Apurinã indigenous people. This led to the first standoff, which included the participation of some Indians and the Apurinã chief. After the death of Wilson Pinheiro, who was murdered in 1980, the rubber tappers resisted the entry of ranchers into the region. Chico Mendes was in Xapuri advising us, organizing the union and the general struggle of the rubber tappers. Rubber extraction has never ceased to exist in Xapuri. From 1981 and 1982 onwards, the landowner used various mechanisms to get rubber tappers out of the allotment: one of them was to propose an agreement to compensate them. If the rubber tappers didn't accept the compensation, pressure was applied by means of gunfire, burning down houses, killing animals and evicting them with intimidation and, in some cases, even murder. Another argument they used, well articulated even by the owners of notary offices, was the signature argument: convincing people to sign a blank piece of paper. The rubber tapper, who couldn't read, would put his fingerprint on a blank sheet of paper, and the landowner and the bailiff would say that they were signing a document in which the landowner undertook not to mess with him on his land. The landowner would take that blank piece of paper, make a declaration in the name of the rubber tapper himself saying that he was giving up his allotment to the landowner and, with that

"The union in Acre arose out of the struggles, it wasn't created to organize the struggles, the unions were the fruit of the struggles. It was because of the conflicts that were happening in the region that the unions had to be created."



document, he would get a court order and evict the rubber tapper from the allotment. Chico began to see that it was necessary to set up some schools so that the rubber tappers could learn to at least sign their names; at this point Mary Allegretti came in. She came to Acre to do her master's thesis and joined the Movement in Xapuri. Chico and she were able to come up with an education program for Xapuri, which led to the Seringueiro Project and the Poronga Booklet. We set up the first schools in 1982. Mary was the first teacher at the Seringueiro Project, and the first teacher who taught illiterate people on the rubber plantations. We still had no relationship with the indigenous movements. It was through the Seringueiro Project and the discussions about schools that we opened up the debate on the issue of land reform. There were standoffs and, in most of them, we were defeated. They came with the police, with the power of the state, the justice system, and the landowner got legal permission to guarantee deforestation. We resisted and the struggle continued. We needed to think about a new model of land reform. The existing settlements were not working. Various colonization projects were being set up and what we saw was people receiving a parcel from INCRA, going there and – after less than a year – leaving there dying of malaria and without any assistance. They were forced to sell and hand over the land to the farmer. This is also how many cattle ranches were built in our region. This discussion on the issue of agrarian reform was the beginning of everything. Until then, the idea of the Amazon and Acre was of an empty land without people, with a few Indians scattered throughout the forest. But apart from Indians, it was thought that there was no one else apart from the people who lived in the city. That's why it was important to occupy the Amazon. Once again, Chico saw the need to mobilize, to go to Brasília and show the authorities that there were many hard-working, honest and good people in the Amazon: Indians, rubber tappers, caboclos and river dwellers. So the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers took place, with the support of many

people in Amazonas, Rondônia, Acre and Amapá. The meeting gave rise to the idea of an Extractivist Reserve. Chico was aware that it was important for rubber tappers to have a voice in the National Constituent Assembly. He partnered with Lula, who was a Constituent Delegate for São Paulo, and with Chieftan Mário



Juruna, a Constituent for Rio de Janeiro: two important leaders in guaranteeing progress in the land reform chapter of the 1988 Constitution. We got closer to the indigenous people through Terri [Aquino], [Antônio] Macêdo and Mauro Almeida, who brought the indigenous chiefs closer to Chico Mendes. Chief Soeiro went with Chico to Brasília. This old chief, Siã Kaxinawá's father, was an important figure in this process. It was from him that I first heard words about the need for an alliance between Indians and rubber tappers to defend the territory. That's how the Peoples of the Forest came together. This is how the Peoples of the Forest Alliance began: it was legitimized after Chico Mendes' death and is still alive today. With the resumption of the Alliance in 2007, with the restructuring of the Alliance, we are once again going to take an extremely important step by leveraging the debate on climate change, because we have conquered the forests and demarcated the territories. Today we look after 120 million





Acervo CNS

hectares of forest, which need to be preserved. I spent a lot of time with Chico Mendes born on a settlement half an hour away from where he lived. I grew up with Chico Mendes and I know how he became literate. I'm aware that Chico had a wisdom that seemed to come from beyond. One thing I'm very proud of is that he left us recommendations that are basic principles for each of us who are leaders. One of them is the issue of responsibility, another is the commitment you have to have to what you believe in, and the third is to always think about the unity of the group. Chico had this notion of discipline, responsibility, commitment and loyalty. He held, as sacred basic principles, that someone who wanted to be a leader had to possess these principles. Anyone who spent time with Chico, even if they sometimes want to take a different path, can't help but lose their way just by remembering his message during union meetings. We are all aware that a great leader needs to be disciplined, responsible, committed, respectful, united with the group and also has to read a lot in order to pass on information to his colleagues. This is the great message that Chico gave to all of us. That's why Marina [Silva], Júlia [Feitoza], Raimundo Barros, Gomercindo [Rodrigues], Jorge Viana and I are all guided and bound by the teachings of Chico Mendes. In the future, we need our leaders to come from the grassroots, from our midst. Once again, I say that the Peoples of the Forest Alliance and the International Peoples of the Forest Alliance will play a fundamental role in convincing governments and civil society that it is necessary to invest in research and technology so that we can identify, account for and tabulate all the wealth that the standing forest offers us.



*A long time ago there was only darkness.
 The roads have always been dangerous.
 Sometimes the streams flooded.
 Sometimes the fish was missing.
 Sometimes we ate well.
 Sometimes all I had was flour.
 News, only once in a while,
 On the radios in the sheds or on the
 motorboats.
 The debt consumed all the work.
 School was a forbidden word.
 Health only for the bosses.
 The future was something
 That seemed like it would never come.
 There, on top of the pain, the thorny soil.
 We started to grow the flower,
 Light is now built in.
 Our union became
 The lit poronga that illuminates the way.
 And our fight,
 Even with bloodshed
 On our side,
 It grew, and we started to build
 Our future without bosses
 Without exploitation or violence.
 Today our children are beginning to feel
 That life is worth living
 With our Extractivist Reserve proposal
 And the Indian is our companion
 On this journey, of which we are
 Taking another step today with the
 1st Meeting of Forest Peoples.*

Poem read by Júlio Barbosa de Aquino at the opening of the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest, which took place from March 25 to 31, 1989, in Rio Branco – Acre – Brazil.



Marcos Jorge Dias



STANDOFFS AGAINST DEFORESTATION

With the arrival of cattle ranchers from the south of the country in the mid-1970s to clear our forest areas, the situation became increasingly difficult for us. That's when we started using a very important tool here in our region, which we call a standoff [empate]. Just like in soccer matches, we always want to at least draw [empatar], so in our case, the standoff was to resist, so that at least the landowner wouldn't cut down our trees and destroy our allotments, which is where we live with our families. At first, the families tried to resist on their own. Later, the community began to be mobilized by the Union, which organized trips to the area that was about to be cleared. It was a simple and peaceful, but very organized form of resistance. The people would set up a human barrier, made up of the people who lived on the rubber plantation, the women and children would go along, the old people too, and everyone would stand in front of the scythes of the laborers and enforcers where there was an attempt to clear the land. As the laborers and enforcers were simple people, many of them were even our relatives who were just there following their bosses' orders. We tried to explain to them that if they deforested, their lives and those of their families were also being threatened. Sometimes it worked, or at least the group bought time for one of us to try to find some recourse in the city; other times it didn't work. Of the 45 or so standoffs we held between 1976 and 1988, the last one with Chico Mendes' participation was the Cachoeira standoff, in May 1988. In about 15 of them we actually managed to stall the deforestation. The standoffs were very important in our struggle, because they strengthened our union, served as the basis for the formation of the CNS and also for the construction of our model of agrarian reform for the Amazon, the Extractivist Reserves. (Statement given to Zezé Weiss, for this 3rd edition of Voices of the Forest).

Júlio Barbosa de Aquino





Elson Martins



ELSON MARTINS

I was born on the Nova Olinda rubber plantation, in Alto Rio Iaco, in 1939. I was very sickly as a child. I grew up a more withdrawn child, [feeling] humiliated compared to a brother three years younger, who at eight already knew how to handle a machete on the rubber plantation. Nova Olinda belonged to a large rubber plantation owner during the first rubber cycle. When rubber production went into decline, my father bought the plantation for a pittance. That was after 1910, at the end of the Amazon Belle Époque. It was at this time, when the rubber tappers abandoned the rubber plantations, that the society of the forest peoples began to be built, because only those who had learned to live in the forest stayed. My family was part of that society. At the end of the 1940s, I went to live in the city of Sena Madureira with a sister who was married to a “rubber soldier”. Actually, a tailor from Ceará, who didn’t adapt to the hard work of cutting rubber. So I started going up and down rivers. In 1958, at the age of 19, I boarded a steamship to Belém, from where I crossed the island of Marajó to Macapá, in Amapá. I read the book *O Encontro Marcado*, by Fernando Sabino, which also marked my life forever. I decided to make my way to Belo Horizonte in 1963. I started doing “odd jobs” on the Inconfidência and Tiradentes radio stations. I was seen by my colleagues as an exotic being from the Amazon. In 1964, the military coup came and ran over my soul. At Rádio Tiradentes, I had a friend who had taken part in the Caparaó Guerrilla. In mid-1969, João Alberto Capiberibe, a student leader from the Amazon [elected governor and senator for Amapá in the 1990s] recruited me and Tito Guimarães – my guerrilla friend – for a guerrilla group in Pará. He was coming from a meeting with Carlos Marighella in São Paulo, with the mission of recruiting young people for the struggle. We agreed. We started working for a newspaper and a radio station in the Prelature of Macapá, led by a left-wing priest. Everything was going well until Marighella was killed and we decided to put the headline on the cover of *A Voz Católica*: “A great Brazilian has died! Murdered!” Fired [from the newspaper] and cornered, we even prepared to hijack an airplane with the idea of fleeing to Cuba. Tito was arrested in

Belém, I in Macapá, but then taken to the Federal Police in the capital of Pará. Over the next few years I became an outcast in the area. I left the Federal Police with the record of Amapá’s number one communist. I suffered many hardships until 1975, when journalist Lúcio Flávio Pinto appointed me as a correspondent for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* in Acre, where the rubber plantations were being sold at a bargain price, and there was talk that the newly arrived southern farmers were the new owners of Acre. Deforestation and burning were advancing on the remaining rubber tappers, and families were being expelled with the connivance or omission of the police, the courts, politicians and the government. Among the few dissenting voices were the Bishop of Acre and Purus, Dom Moacyr Grechi, and the Contag delegate, João Maia. Dom Moacyr worked with Liberation Theology, through the CEBs, and João Maia organized the rural workers’ unions. During the creation of the Brasília union, Chico Mendes was uninhibited and cheerful, helping people who couldn’t read to fill in the membership forms. He was so enthusiastic that João Maia asked me if he was someone who had been infiltrated into the Movement by the landowners. I met Chico on that occasion, in December 1975, and soon realized that he was someone special. The Union calmed the situation on the Carmem and Sacado rubber plantations, where Mrs. Valdiza lived, but the agreement based on the Land Statute and accepted by Contag, whereby the rubber tappers would receive small plots of 50 hectares, given by the ranchers, didn’t work out. The rubber plantation measured 300 hectares, and there was no fence. In the workers’ assemblies, this led to the idea of Extractivist Reserves, later defended by Chico Mendes, which became a model for land reform in the Amazon. Since the collapse of the rubber plantations, the extractivists had lived as self-employed people, still with the presence of a boss, but without the harsh old rules. Now everyone could have a small plot of land, raise animals and hunt. The forest man didn’t want to become a farmer. The fact that there are no fences in the forest was important to him. It was a space for collective use, with three



rubber roads – each with 150 trees – forming petals around the allotment. These roads or petals crossed with those of neighbors without any conflict. When the southerners began to cut down the forest and put up fences preventing the rubber tappers from roaming freely, the threatened came to their senses: if the forest belonged to everyone, it had to be defended by everyone. Our relationship, which was that of a reporter and his preferred source, changed during the struggle. He brought me back to the identity of the rubber plantation, and we became friends and allies against the aggressors of the forest. The Joint Effort against the Enforcers, organized in September 1979, with the participation of the eight unions created in Acre, was exemplary. The families of the BR-317, Rio Branco–Boca do Acre stretch, in the state of Amazonas, who were suffering at the hands of a gang of enforcers, saw the aggressors run away in fear. Wilson Pinheiro led a standoff with 300 union members. Encouraged by the success of the standoffs, Wilson sent a message to the landowners: “From now on, we won’t let any trees be cut down in Acre.” The landowners replied, with the backing of the UDR [Democratic Rural Union], that if this were the case, “many widows would appear”. On July 21, 1980, Wilson Pinheiro’s wife became the first widow of a leader killed in the struggle. Chico Mendes took over the Movement, moving its nucleus to Xapuri. A new style of leadership emerged. Born and raised in the forest, simple and patient, but without running away from danger, Chico went out looking for alliances to save the huge new world he defended and loved. He took the rubber tappers’ struggle to newspaper, radio and TV newsrooms. He gave lectures at universities, joined social scientists and looked for partners in the country and abroad. As early as 1977, when the Varadouro newspaper, of which I was one of the editors, began to circulate, he considered it a trench and became its correspondent in the forest. When he was assassinated on December 22, 1988, Chico had accumulated national and international awards and had also become an environmental leader. He had spread his cry of faith and hope around the world.

“Chico Mendes left as his legacy the symbolism of a movement born in the heart of the Amazon, fundamental for the preservation of the region.”



Arquivo Elson Martins



LEIDE AQUINO

I'm Leide Aquino, from Xapuri. As a teenager, I began my activism in the Catholic Church's Grassroots Ecclesial Communities, from where I went straight to the Rubber Tappers' Movement here in Acre. I had the privilege of taking part in the beginning of the discussion about Extractivist Reserves, which in fact began with the struggle of the standoffs in the mid-1970s. From the resistance in the standoffs, I went to the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union to work with women. There I had my first direct participation in the management of a movement. I'm proud to say that our union in Xapuri was the first in the state of Acre to organize a Municipal Meeting of Extractivist Women, in May 1988, most of whom were rubber tappers. From there, I went to the regional coordination of the CNS here in Acre, where I had the opportunity to organize the discussion about what we wanted an Extractivist Reserve to look like. In practice, it was already decided that the Extractivist Reserve would be a huge area, respecting the allotments and the use of the forest's renewable natural resources by the rubber tappers, but what we were going to do, how we were going to do it, we didn't even know. That was a time of many discussions about extractivism and the environment, especially within Contag, which until then had been practically unaware of our efforts here in Acre to reconcile the issue of agriculture and family production with the environmental issue. In this sense, we played a very important role. I remember the first time I attended Contag meetings. I thought I was a fish out of water, because what the comrades were discussing in Brasilia and the rest of the country was not what we were discussing in our region. One of our main advances is that we managed to establish that the specific characteristics of the Amazon region, especially its communities and traditional populations, require differentiated treatment from governments, private initiative and organized civil society entities. We raised this banner, and this is an achievement that no one will be able to take away from us. The whole issue of the struggle for land, the demarcation of indigenous lands and the conquest of Extractivist Reserves is

now a reality in our lives. Today the condition of rubber tappers, indigenous people and traditional populations is better, because at least we have this dialogue with the state. In Chico's time, the government kept such a distance from us that having or not having a government didn't make the slightest difference. Today, we don't have a single community that doesn't have some kind of school, whether it's a beautiful school, built with large buildings, or just a classroom. Today we are everywhere – on the rivers, in the villages, in the settlements, in the urban communities – everywhere. This is our Acrean way of continuing to honor the memory and ideals of Chico Mendes.



Acervo CNS



"What struck me most at that time was the Cachoeira standoff, because it was a struggle for all of us. We were camped out for more than 30 days, always with 200, 250, 300 people taking turns. It was a daily relay, a movement of hope. That was my baptism of fire in the Movement."

Acervo CNS



OSMARINO AMÂNCIO RODRIGUES

I'm there in my allotment, in my usual place, on the Chico Mendes Reserve. I practically live off chestnuts, because the price isn't worth it to cut rubber. I got to know Chico Mendes through Raimundo Barros, who worked killing mosquitoes for SUCAM (Superintendence of Public Health Campaigns). We started to meet up at the forró dance parties and soccer games in the forest. Then came the time for fighting. Our political discussion began in 1973, through the Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (CEBs). We began to be surprised by the expulsion of rubber tappers from their allotments, by deforestation in Rondônia and Acre, for the establishment of extensive cattle ranching, with subsidies from the Federal Government. A little before that, at the end of the 1960s, I had my first political conversation with Chico. At that time, there was still white slavery on our rubber plantations. For every 100 kilos of rubber, the rubber tapper gave twenty as a tare to the owner of the rubber plantation. Then we saw that the more we accepted these rules, the more dominated we were. And it was Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes who started this discussion. Our conquests came alongside our own struggle, where the leaders had their heads put up for death, with prices published in the Rio Branco newspapers. Chico had a communist friend who later became my guru. He was Raimundo Rocha: a very intelligent, well-informed and communicative guy. He came from the Araguaia Guerrilla and was a great cordel poet. The municipalities were springing up and he was already writing the anthems. When socialism didn't arrive, he fell into a depression and became an alcoholic. In December 1975, the STR (Rural Workers' Union) of Brasília was founded. Chico was the first secretary. The first president was Elias Rosendo. Six months later he left and Wilson Pinheiro joined. The first standoff [organized by the Union] was in March 1976, on the Carmem Rubber Plantation. The word standoff [empate] was very important at the time, because in sport [to "empatar" means] nobody loses and

nobody wins. But here, a draw meant victory, it meant keeping the forest standing. That's how our song went around here: Wilson Pinheiro calling an assembly, Chico in his ear, telling stories. To one or 500, he spoke the same way. There was that Trotsky thing for talking to illiterates and intellectuals alike, making people think without having to say anything. Chico was a revolutionary who discussed socialism and agrarian reform. He would say: "Comrades, we have to be hopeful because in São Paulo the workers are striking for better pay. They're even discussing profit sharing." Chico made illiterate people read newspapers. He talked about difficult subjects in a way that any rubber tapper could understand. The rubber tapper was crazy about a branch [road], and Chico was saying that he was right, that a branch was important, but that this big branch called BR was going to drive the rubber tapper out of the rubber plantation. Wilson Pinheiro's death was a sad situation. We used to say that if they killed one of us, ten of them would fall, but that's not how it happened. The Rural Democratic Union (UDR) took over the Union for two years. I tore up a lot of landowner, enforcer and police records after we retook the Union. The way to resist was for Chico to leave for Xapuri and me for Assis Brasil. We founded new unions and generalized the struggle. The great advance that I see is that the Movement solved the land problem and we opened doors for our products. Today Brazil nuts are reaching the organic market. We have education on the rubber plantation, not the way we want it – because the school doesn't organize the struggle – but it's still a school. For us, the 1980s was a time of pain and conquests: we created the National Council of Rubber Tappers, the Extractivist Reserves and, with the Indians, the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. We would rather have had nothing and had Chico alive. But Chico's death was not in vain, as he imagined. After his death, the tragedy of deaths foretold ended. I think the Queen of the Forest demanded Chico's sacrifice to save our lives.





"Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes were friends who respected and complemented each other. I miss them both very much. But while on the one hand I'm saddened by these deaths, on the other I'm happy to have had the good fortune to have taken part in this movement together with them."

Osmarino Amâncio



RAIMUNDO MONTEIRO

I was born here on the Cachoeira rubber plantation and I've spent almost my entire life here in Cachoeira. Together with Chico Mendes, I helped found the Brasília Rural Workers' Union in 1975 and the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union in 1977. Chico and I started fighting together when I was 28 and he was 16. We started and continued fighting together until the day he was murdered on December 22, 1988. In our movement, we suffered a lot after Chico's death, but we also had many successes. In fact, one thing that was very good was that at the time of the standoffs, when the government, which was very irresponsible, supported those who wanted to cut down the forest, we fought here in Cachoeira for 17 days and, even before Chico died, we already knew that we would have our reserve, which ended up being an extractivist settlement, with 700,000 hectares. Here, we still work with a measure of two roads per placement: 120 to 150 trees per road. And for the time being, nothing has been planted here. It's all natural. But we're thinking of densifying, planting a few more rubber trees and exploring other things too. The forest here is very dense and there's a lot inside that we can still explore. This is a point where Chico Mendes' dream has yet to be realized. He wanted to use the forest's products so that we wouldn't have to cut down the trees.

"I'm already old, but as long as I can move, I'll happily continue working for the development of Cachoeira the way Chico wanted."



Luiz Maia/Comitê Chico Mendes





SABÁ MARINHO

I feel emotional when I talk about Chico Mendes. I met Chico when he was a candidate for councilman for the MDB, he was elected, but then he left the party, because Chico didn't read from the same book as the MDB. Chico fought on behalf of the workers and at that time anyone who did that was always considered subversive among the people, which is why Chico had to leave the MDB. But Chico didn't bow down and started an even bigger fight together with the workers. Together, we fought for the presidency of the union, and he was elected with the support of the CEBs, Dom Moacyr, the priests and the sisters who helped us to strengthen the movement. Chico didn't accept the migration of workers from the forest to the city, because he knew that we didn't have the education needed to live in the city and get a good job. Those who came to the city had to beg, go hungry, watch their sons steal and their daughters become prostitutes. Chico and we were fighting against this reality. Defending the forest meant defending the families who lived in the forest. Chico was a wonderful person who didn't know how to say no. In everything we occupied, Chico always said: "We'll find a way, we'll solve it". He would sometimes say to me: "Bring me a little piece of venison." And we would put a quarter of a deer in a bag and bring it to Chico. When we arrived, sometimes he wasn't at home, I would give it to Ilza, and she would invite me: "You have to come and have lunch with us." I'd get to the union and say to Chico: "You don't know what I brought you", and then he'd say: "I'm about to know what you brought." And then I'd say: "It was venison I brought you." He'd say: "Oh, but you're going to have lunch with us." That's what we'd do, go and have lunch with him, lie down on the floor of his house and we'd start talking. It was like a family, Chico was part of our family. How many times was I summoned by the police to testify, and he never let the police pick me up. He would send me a note, telling me to come, I would arrive, talk to him, and then I would go to the police station, never alone, always accompanied by him. So I remember Chico like this, like

a brother, like a very dear member of my family. I used to say to Chico: "Chico, they're going to kill you. What do we do?" He said: "Nothing, buddy. You don't get flowers without tears." And I said to him: "But Chico, I don't want to see your blood spilled." At one point I even told Chico to leave Acre, he had friends outside, he could leave. He told me: "Mate, fear is the coward's weapon, I'm not going to stray from the path." I remember Chico at the Cachoeira Standoff, with the Death Squad there at the junction, everyone armed, and Chico and I passing through the middle together, he was buying something at the bar, putting it in the car, and when we passed back through the middle of the armed guys, he said: "Guns don't intimidate me, I don't want to be a coward." Chico never wanted a violent fight, he always wanted peace, he always wanted us to settle things in peace, that was one of the points he most defended. Even when we wanted to get angry, he would say: "Wait a minute, mate, I don't want to see bloodshed, I want to talk." He was a man of dialogue. When I was there on the rubber plantation and Chico knew that there were people waiting for me on the road to kill me, he would send a note telling me not to pass that way, because there was someone waiting to kill me. So I didn't go. I was threatened a lot, and my son was shot in a hideout because the guys said that if they got one of my family it would be something, but luckily the shot only hit him in the arm. After Chico's death, I believe that this war isn't over yet, and the fact that Darly is free represents a great danger to all of us. When Darly says on television that Chico wasn't killed, that he was the one who killed himself, that's a threat to those of us who are alive. For me, what he's trying to say is: "Don't mess with me, because I don't kill, you kill yourselves, and someone will end up dying because of this story." What I feel about Chico is nostalgia, sadness, hope and faith that he will never die, because his memory is still here with us, in this ongoing struggle. May God not allow us to lose any more lives, because we will continue to fight his fight, which is our own fight.



"It was from the Union that we organized ourselves to confront the farmers, stalling the felling of the forest, because Chico's goal was not to let this forest be cut down and fall."



SIÃ KAXINAWÁ

I'm writing this testimonial to tell you a little about my journey with the Indigenous Peoples' movement and with the Forest Peoples' movement. I am taking part in this book because I believe that my personal and collective experience can serve as a stimulus for many friends who need courage and encouragement to continue the struggle for the right to dignity and survival of the Peoples of the Forest. My real name is Siã Huni Kuin, but in Portuguese I was baptized as José Osair Sales. Half of my 60 years have been spent cutting rubber trees. The other half I've spent fighting for human rights, in a struggle that wasn't born with me, that goes back a long way, and that won't end with me. This is a struggle for the old, for the present and also for the future generation. A struggle for all of us. I come from a family of great leadership. My grandparents, my parents, my uncles and my relatives knew how to organize our Huni Kuin people to fight for our rights and our lands. They taught me to have the courage to fight and to work to support my family. To have an open heart, free from judgment. To live life with joy and with respect for people, the land, the water and the air. Like my parents, I entered the struggle at an early age. From an early age, I was trained to organize my people by learning various tasks, observing and listening to many people. During this time, I took part in several important historical moments for the Peoples of the Forest: the demarcation of the first indigenous lands, including my Huni Kuin land; the creation of the first Extractivist Reserves and the organization of the first indigenous cooperative in Acre, led by my father, the Huni Kuin chief Soeiro. I saw the birth and participated in the creation of SIÃ KAXINAWÁ, the first indigenous organizations in the Amazon and important non-indigenous organizations in

"Our struggle continues. We continue to fight to preserve the natural riches that are still in our hands: the water, the forest, the land. This will not be a small struggle. How good it would be if Chico Mendes were here to help strengthen it. We miss him so much!"

Brazil and Latin America, organizations that have always been partners of the indigenous cause and of the Peoples of the Forest. I was born on the Fortaleza rubber plantation, on the banks of the Jordão river, in 1964. At the age of 20, I came to Rio Branco to study. I wanted to join Mobral to learn to read, because I could barely sign my name. On the rubber plantation it was all hunting, fishing, medicine, spirituality and rubber tapping. As I didn't have a father or mother in Rio Branco, Txai Terri Aquino advised me to go to the Nazaré rubber plantation, in the municipality of Xapuri, because there was the Seringueiro Project there, where Chico Mendes allowed indigenous people to study at the rubber tappers' school. So I went to Xapuri and Chico Mendes put me in his school. It was a hard life: I worked during the day and studied at night, like everyone else. Before that I had never heard of him, but after I met him, in 1984, I never wanted to leave Chico's side. We became very good friends and talked a lot. We used to do standoffs together with our comrades. As we got closer, I began to tell him my story. I told him I knew how to record conversations and film images. He then asked me to record his fight. I started recording when I had recording material, always on a voluntary basis. Chico Mendes was a really poor rubber tapper. When I found some money, I would share a drink with him. When he got some money, he shared a drink with me. And so our friendship grew stronger and stronger. Chico was a very caring human being. He knew how to conduct meetings and everyone liked him very much. Only the Rural Democratic Union (UDR), which was responsible for his murder, didn't respect his importance to the forest. The UDR had a lot of power, a lot of money to hire thugs and buy off the police. Not Chico. He



didn't even have the money to defend himself and it wasn't his custom to deal with bandits. The UDR became increasingly angry because he was becoming famous and appearing in the newspapers of Acre, Brazil and the world. That's why the UDR killed Chico Mendes. I keep thinking... if Chico were alive, he would be smiling a lot, because he thought that the first achievements would come in ten years, but they started coming in three - when the first Extractivist Reserve was demarcated - and it hasn't stopped. Today our representations are respected and our Peoples of the Forest Alliance is still active. That was certainly a reason for Chico to be smiling. Chico would be happy to know that the struggle of the Indigenous Peoples he helped to strengthen has borne tasty and colorful fruit. Little by little, prejudice and discrimination are diminishing. Little by little, our rightful place is being recognized beyond the borders of our territory. We owe a lot of this to Chico Mendes and all the leaders of the Peoples of the Forest.



Siã Kaxinawá



TOYA MANCHINERU

I'm Toya Manchineru, of the Manchineri people, from the Lands of Laco, on the border between Brazil and Peru. This is a privileged area because it is the largest in rural extension and has a native rubber plantation. The Mapkaha community is home to twelve villages. 111 families live there: it is the largest indigenous area in the state of Acre. The territories of the Manchineri people are preserved because the population is conscientious in the use of natural resources. We take good care of our land because it is our home and we get everything we need from it. The land is our supermarket and our bank. The Manchineri are relatives of the Piro, from the Peruvian Amazon. We come from the same trunk. Our language is Aruak, from the Maipure branch. Most of the Manchineri live in the Mamoadate Indigenous Land. Many families live on rubber plantations in Acre, especially inside the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve. Our ecological environment is made up of rivers, clean fields and forest. We are used to wandering through this space and from it we get our food and our survival. The biggest struggle here is to preserve traditional knowledge and the natural wealth of our lands. We have a very rich territory with abundant biodiversity that needs to be defended from biopiracy. This misappropriation of genetic resources and traditional knowledge causes harm and concern among the Indigenous Peoples of Acre. Our wealth is taken and traded without our authorization. There have been reports of biopiracy in the case of Ayahuasca, the Kambô frog and Cupuaçu. We recognize that we need to maintain the identity of the Amazon's Indigenous Peoples and rescue traditional knowledge as a means of maintaining and preserving forest life. This was one of the banners that indigenous people and rubber tappers defended together in the Peoples of the Forest Alliance during the time of Chico Mendes. Today I think that the time I spent with the rubber tappers and especially with Chico Mendes at the time of the standoffs was a time of great companionship and unity. If I had to think of one word to define Chico Mendes, it would be companionship. After his death, we are still in alliance with the rubber tappers. Today, the

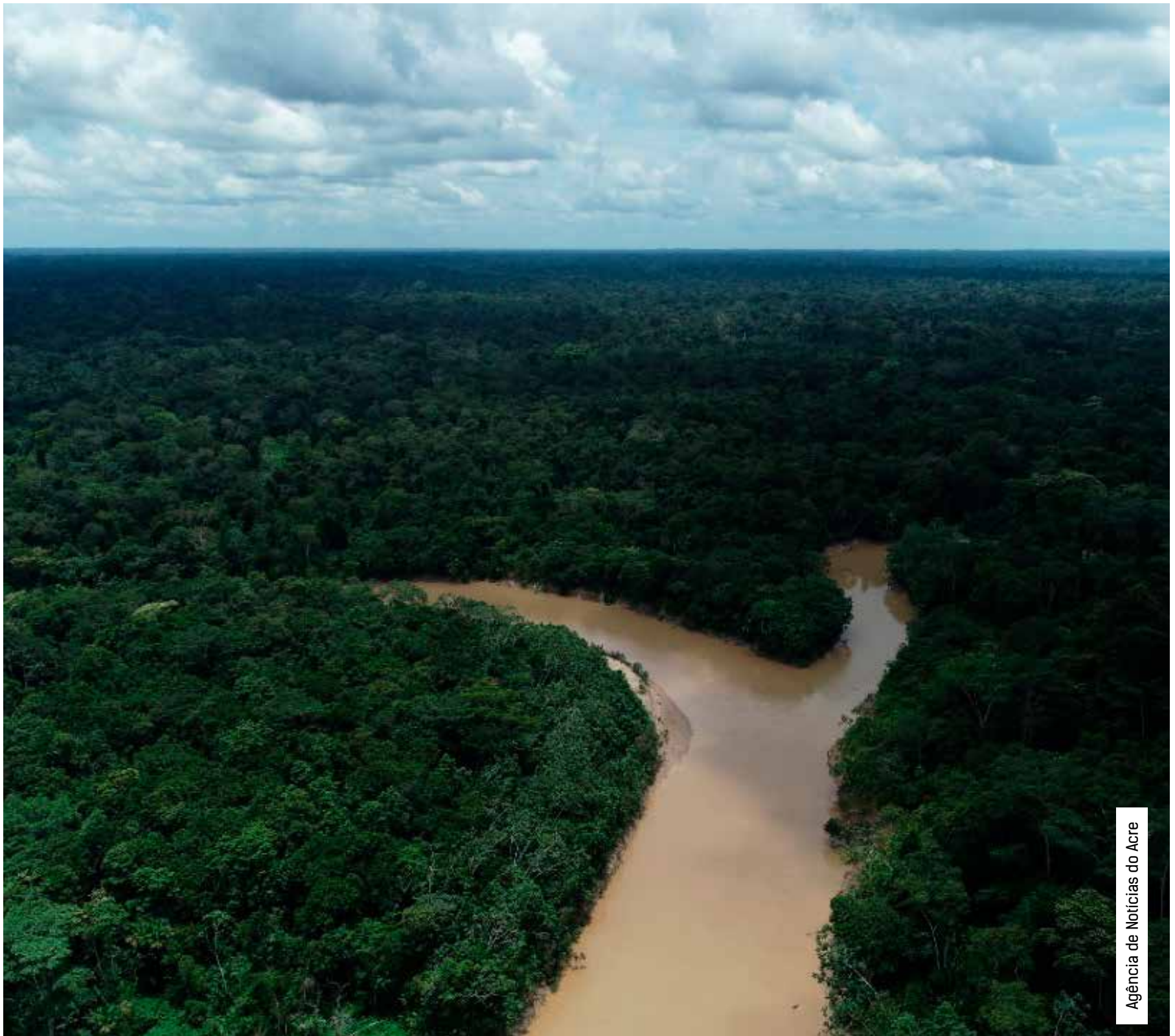
struggles are different. We have many achievements, but also many other challenges. Many other struggles will require our unity, the strength of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.

"We've been in this struggle for a long time. Our people were among the first to form an alliance with the rubber tappers. I myself was among the first young people who went to Xapuri to help Chico Mendes in the standoffs."



Comitê Chico Mendes





Agência de Notícias do Acre



UNION





Miranda Smith



"But who knows, Chico – in five, ten, eight years' time – the workers' resistance movement will start to emerge. New unions will be created, and the dictatorship will have to accept them. Now, all of this will be controlled by military ideology. All these unions will see intervention," and that's what happened. "Now here's the thing: you can't not join that union. It will arrive: maybe today, maybe tomorrow. The union for the rubber tappers will arrive and you'll join. You can't not join the union because that's where you'll put down your roots. That's what will root you. I guarantee that one day, if they don't kill you, you'll be a great force for your comrades." I kept thinking to myself: is this going to happen? (According to a statement by Chico Mendes to Lucélia Santos, in May 1988).

Euclides Fernandes Távara





AMINE CARVALHO SANTANA

I became an activist in the mid-1980s, when I graduated from university with a degree in History and went to work at the Amazon Workers' Center (CTA), with an oral history project called: *O resgate, a luta e a resistência dos seringueiros de Xapuri* (The rescue, struggle and resistance of the rubber tappers of Xapuri). From then on, working with the CTA team, we began to get involved with the women rural workers of Xapuri. We began by discussing with them why so many women took part in the struggles, went to the fronts without fear, but had no participation as members of the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union. We started this work with women workers in 1984 and continued until a little after Chico's death. In the discussions we held at meetings and workshops, we discovered that the women didn't participate in the Union because they didn't have the money to pay their monthly fees. It was a very beautiful movement. The women brought various products and handicrafts from their allotments. We held a fair in the square and with the money raised, we started to get women to join. It was during this time that a large number of women became union members in Xapuri. In 1988 we organized a big event with women workers from the countryside and the city. Chico took part, Lucélia Santos came, it was a meeting with a lot of energy, a lot of excitement. Chico was very supportive of the Women's Movement, he always argued that the struggle would get stronger with the female comrades in the Party and the Union. When Chico came to Rio Branco, his reference was the CTA. People called to talk to him, to schedule things with him and, in general, I was one of the people who took care of that schedule. Shortly before his death, I called Xapuri because [Antonio] Macêdo wanted him to go to Cruzeiro do Sul to inaugurate a cooperative. Chico said he couldn't because Ilzamar was ill and he wouldn't resume his schedule until after Christmas. A few days before he was murdered, he passed through Rio Branco on his way back from Rio de Janeiro. He had stopped by the CTA on a Wednesday, about five o'clock in the afternoon, and I wasn't there. He then left a note under the door saying that he had tried to find me and

that he wasn't coming back to the CTA that day because he was being chased by a white Gol [Volkswagon car]. After that I only spoke to Chico on the phone. I remember our last conversation was about Ilzamar's health. I told him to be careful not to become a widower, and he, on the other end of the line, relaxed a little and had a good laugh. My feeling is that the struggle is not dead, but there is a very big gap. If Chico had been alive, the women of Xapuri, who relied on his direct power, would have conquered much more space. I have no doubt about that!



Arquivo Amine Carvalho



CHICO GINU

I was born Francisco Barbosa de Melo in 1959, but everyone in the Movement knows me as Chico Ginu. When I was still a boy, I became a rubber tapper and union activist in Alto Tarauacá, in Acre. In 1979, I was appointed union delegate at the Restauração rubber plantation, on the Tejo river, in the municipality of Marechal Thaumaturgo, where the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve is today. In 1989, I had the honor of taking part in the founding meeting of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance in Rio Branco. This unfortunately happened after the death of Chico Mendes. We had the first news of the Trade Union Movement in 1976, through the radio receiver from a radio station called Terra dos Nawa, run by the priests of Cruzeiro do Sul. In 1979 I was one of the first to join. That was the time of the biggest conflicts between rubber tappers and rubber tappers. I'm very proud to say that I was one of those who led the fight. In 1989, the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance and the Second Meeting of the National Council of Rubber Tappers took place simultaneously in Rio Branco. We were very determined to bring the indigenous people and the rubber tappers together for a single cause. Chico Mendes had died and the meeting ended up being a moment of commitment and resistance to show Brazil and the world that the movement was not going to stop because of his murder. On the contrary, it was an event to strengthen the struggle. I stayed with the CNS until 2003, as part of the Board of Directors. Then I went to work with 20 associations and three unions in the region. I accompanied the process of creating three Extractivist Reserves: Alto Juruá, Alto Tarauacá and Riozinho da Liberdade. We were very sorry to hear of Chico Mendes' death and to this day we can't come to terms with the loss. We are sad that he is not alive, here with us, to contribute everything he still had to offer. But I think his death has helped to mitigate the destruction of our forests, and all of us leaders have a commitment for the rest of our lives to do Chico's part too.



"The brave struggle of Chico Mendes and the movements is what helped us to hold on to some of the biological and ecological sustainability of the Amazon."



DERCY TELES DE CARVALHO

I was born and raised on the Boa Vista rubber plantation, on the Pimenteira allotment, twelve kilometers from Xapuri, where I still live today. My life was no different from the life of anyone who is born and raised on the rubber plantation. I was brought up by my mother, a quiet housewife. My father was a literate rubber tapper from the Northeast who migrated here in the 1940s. It was he who taught me to read and write. Until I was 18, I led the life common to all rubber tapper women. The routine was to work in the fields and help my mother with the housework. At the beginning of the 1980s, I learned about Liberation Theology and was invited to be a monitor in the communities. Six months after starting work, I was nominated by my community to be a union delegate. This was the start of my political and trade union activism. In 1981, I was elected President of the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union, the first woman to become president of a Rural Workers' Union in Brazil. It was a one-year provisional mandate, defined in an assembly. In 1982, a new election was held. Osmar Facundo was elected president, who also stayed for a short time, because in the same year he was elected as a PT councilman, in the first election in which the PT took part. That's when Chico Mendes came in as a union leader. After my time at the union, I went to work on the Seringueiro Project team; I went to help set up the first Seringueiro Project school, which was in Seringal Nazaré, on the Já com Fome allotment, 12 hours from the city of Xapuri. The inaugural class took place in May 1981, and in 1982 I went to live on the rubber plantation. I lived in Nazaré for three years, preparing people from the community to take over the schools, since it was impossible to find monitors for all the schools that the rubber tappers wanted to set up. In the rubber plantations, the illiteracy rate was very high, so the schools began by working with young people and adults. The aim was to facilitate the circulation of information because, as it was the time of the military regime, all our communication had to be through notes. We couldn't send or receive messages on the radio, because even before the news arrived, there was

already a Federal Police agent chasing after us, wanting to know about it. One way to help provide information and strengthen the workers' organization was to make everyone literate, because information is power, even in our area. Through literacy, the school was able to raise the self-esteem of the rubber tappers and strengthen their belief in their power to fight.

"The Seringueiro Project was very important for the organization of the Movement. Through the creation of the Poronga Booklet, along the lines of the Paulo Freire method, we were not only able to teach reading and writing, but above all, we were able to discuss the relevant and crucial issues that afflicted our people."





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GOMERCINDO RODRIGUES



Revista Xapuri

I worked with Chico Mendes from January 1986 until the day he was murdered on December 22, 1988. I stayed in Xapuri until 1992, and from there I went to Rio Branco to study law, because we were always in need of lawyers and there were never any to defend the workers. The rubber tappers at the Union said: until one of our children graduates, we've already lost everything. I said I was going to study law myself. I graduated from the Federal University of Acre (UFAC) in February 1998. Since then, I've worked at a law firm and I'm still active on the Chico Mendes Committee, of which I'm a founding member, since the night of Chico's murder, and to this day I provide voluntary legal advice. In 1983 I came here, to Acre, recently graduated in agronomy, because in 1982 I was a militant in the student movement, I was part of the struggle to defend the Pantanal, I was a candidate for federal congressman for the PT, I left the polls with 200 and a few votes and, as a defeated PT candidate, I couldn't get a job in my home state of Mato Grosso do Sul. I decided to try Acre. Today I am an Acre citizen, with a title granted by the State Legislative Assembly. I bought a piece of land to farm and, as a farmer, I started attending union meetings and Incra encampments. I went to Xapuri to help evaluate the Seringueiro Project, the part that concerned the experience of cooperatives which, unlike the schools, hadn't worked. I already knew Chico Mendes from the Movement, because he was the main leader at the time. Before becoming a leader in Xapuri, he came from a strong militancy in the Brasília Trade Union, which he took part in founding in 1975, and was elected secretary general of the first board. The STR in Brasília was the first strong workers' organization in Acre and the second union founded in the state (the first was in the city of Sena Madureira). Afterwards, Chico came to Xapuri and, in 1977, he was elected as an MDB councilman and remained in office until 1982, even though he founded the PT, like Lula, in 1980. At the end of the 1960s, the first wave of "paulistas" arrived, as they were called, arriving in Acre to buy up the large tracts of land on



the rubber plantations. They were the ones who bought the land by plane without going into the forest. The ones who asked from above if there were any people down there. Those who, when the sellers said there were no people in the forest, bought the land at a bargain price. And they sent their agents, always accompanied by enforcers, to occupy the spaces that were already occupied. They expelled families and set fires. They tore down houses. The rubber tapper would leave early for work and when he came back, his house was on the ground and his wife was in the yard. It was a lot of violence. The difference was stark: for the landowner the forest was a nuisance, for the rubber tapper the land was what sustained the forest. It was a mismatch of two worlds: for one the land was a store of value, for the other it was the forest that provided everything he needed. The rubber tapper can't survive without the forest. When the landowner deforested, the rubber tapper disappeared. So the rubber tappers, who had no organization, started holding meetings with the Catholic Church's grassroots organizations to discuss how to organize themselves. In the mid-1970s, Contag brought its staff to organize the unions, starting with Sena Madureira and Brasília. The rubber tappers began to leave their allotments to defend the allotments of their comrades: the "standoffs" emerged. In a process of self-defense, the culture of individualism and mistrust began to break down. Because the "standoff" was a matter of survival for the rubber tapper. Either they stalled the deforestation or they would stop being rubber tappers, because there would be no more forest. In Brasília there were several standoffs. In 1980, Wilson Pinheiro was killed, the Union demobilized a little, and the strength of the movement was transferred to Xapuri. In 1983, Chico left the City Council, ran, won and remained president of the Union until the day he was

"Chico became a martyr for the Amazon, and that's the great lesson. Those who shot him missed the target, because Chico will never die."

murdered. In 1980, more than 98% of rubber tappers were illiterate, and deep down there was a mistrust: few could read and write. That's why the others thought they might be doing the math wrong. The schools came about as a way of supporting the cooperative proposal, which had not yet been internalized by the rubber tappers. At that time, I didn't have a salary, I lived off the help of the staff and slept at the Union. Mary Allegretti started the schools, along with Marlete and Fátima. Mary taught classes to encourage people. So did Raimundão. In 1985, the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers took place in Brasília, and the proposal for Extractivist Reserves was launched. For the environmentalists

who had been defending the preservation of the forest only with words, without having a project, while the government was "developing" the Amazon with words, projects and money to finance the devastation through the Bank of the Amazon, there was now a banner, a sustainable "development model", the rubber tappers' Extractivist Reserves to defend. Since the Brasília meeting, the Amazon has had two distinct projects: one by the government and cattle ranchers, and the other by the Peoples of the Forest, with

the support of environmentalists. The rubber tappers said: "We want our areas like those of the Indians, with the land belonging to the State and us having the right to use it without destroying it". Someone said: "You're not Indians, you're extractivists." There, at the meeting, the "Extractivist Reserve" emerged, as the expression of a proposal that came from the rubber tappers. Chico was not a leader of the National Rubber Tappers' Council, but his leadership in the rubber tappers' movement was undeniable. As he was running for mayor, Chico went to Brasília and opened the meeting; he came to Xapuri, campaigned, and then returned to close the meeting in Brasília. It was he who presented the proposal

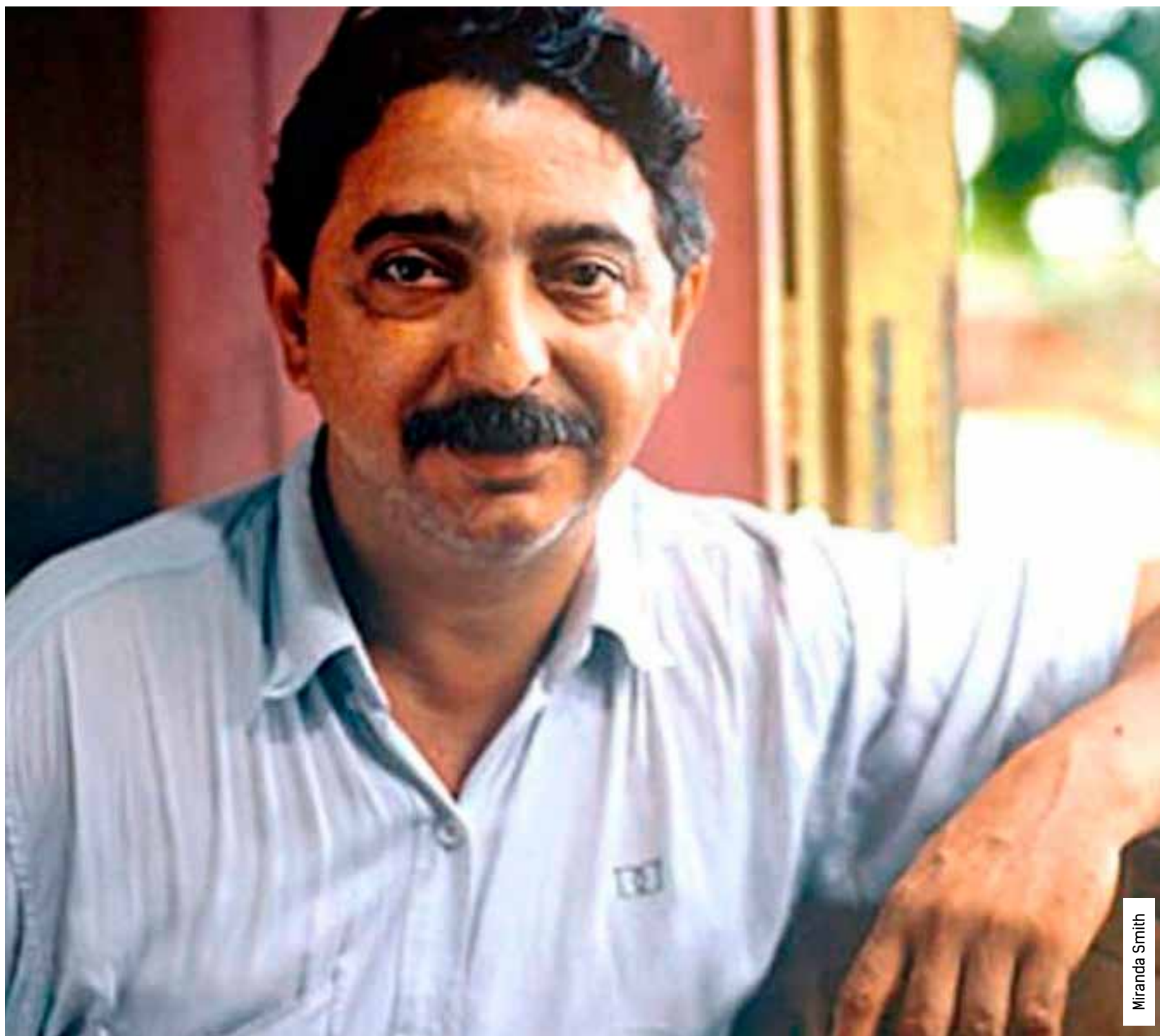




for Extractivist Reserves, where rubber tappers could improve their quality of life and remain in the forest. And Chico, who wasn't good at giving speeches but was fantastic at talking, became the spokesperson for this proposal, which won the sympathy of the world. He explained and everyone understood. He captivated and attracted people. Chico always sought out different allies: from the environmentalists of the PV [Green Party] in Rio de Janeiro to the militants of the PT in Rio de Janeiro – he brought everyone together, regardless of their political leanings. He always knew how to use the media, he always had information. He wrote a lot, and well. His writing was simple and direct: it was very cool. There might have been a few grammatical errors from a guy who had little schooling, but his ideas were fantastic. Chico would travel further, and I would walk further into the rubber plantation carrying the news he sent: letters, notes, information. Sometimes he'd call me and say: "Guma, we're achieving this, that. You go to this place, tell your comrades that we're making progress." I would

discuss the creation of the cooperatives with the support of the union. We spent a year talking, exchanging ideas and, in June 1988, we set up the Xapuri Agro-Extractivist Cooperative (CAEX), which is still operating today. As CAEX was the first agro-extractivist cooperative, the whole process had to be adjusted. The statutes had to be changed, because any agrarian cooperative requires members to own land and, in our case, there was no property. We started with only 33 members, because everyone wanted to see what would happen before joining. Today, after it worked, the cooperative has more than 300 members. The fantastic thing about all this was what I learned from the rubber tappers, from the rural workers of Xapuri. What Raimundão taught me, what Chico taught me... I only lament how little time I had to learn from Chico, because while I could see two meters in front of me, Chico could see two hundred in front of him. He was always way ahead of all of us. In a simple way, he always saw the horizon very clearly. He was the one who said: "Now it's time to negotiate, now it's time to be tough". In 1988, Colonel Castelo Branco, Acre's Secretary of Public Security, arrived in Xapuri, called the Union and asked Chico to go to the police station. Chico went and, when they opened the door, the secretary was talking to Darly Alves. When he saw Chico, he said: "Come in! I'm calling you here to hold hands and become friends". Chico said, "No! That man is not my friend. Whenever you want to talk to me, I'll talk to you, but I don't have anything to talk to this guy about!". Then Chico wrote in Ventania, our little newspaper: "They proposed to Chico Mendes that he put his hands on Darly's as a friend. It's the same as putting a lamb in a lion's cage, with the provision that the lion won't eat the lamb. Then the lamb disappears, and they say: no, it wasn't the lion, because it was agreed with the lion not to eat the lamb." By publishing that little note, Chico showed how clear he was about this.





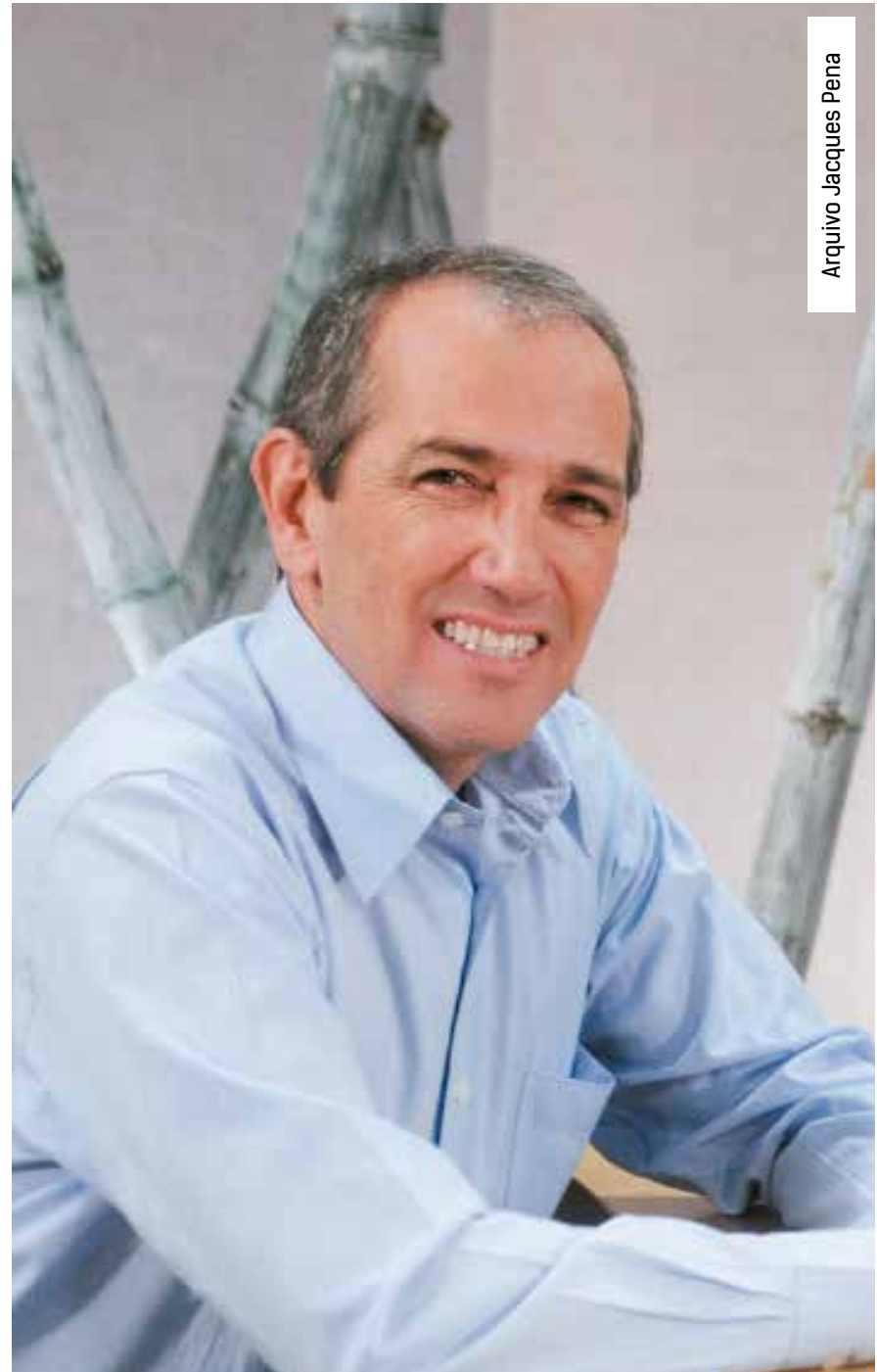
Miranda Smith



JACQUES PENA

The price Chico Mendes paid for his commitment to the collective struggle was very high: it was with his own life. I met Chico in São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, in the cold days of August 1983. This meeting took place during the plenary sessions that culminated on the 28th with the creation of the Unified Workers' Headquarters [Central Única dos Trabalhadores] (CUT). The National Directorate of the CUT had only one effective member from Acre: Chico Mendes, from the Xapuri Workers' Union. The Federal District had three representatives. I was one of them, representing the Brasília Bank Workers' Union. We then took part in CUT meetings, plenaries and congresses together until, in December 1988, violence against rural workers' leaders – denounced by the CUT's national leadership – took Chico Mendes' life. Unfortunately, at that time, many people fell victim to intoxication and violence. Defending the forest and a dignified life for its peoples 35 years ago did not have the national and international recognition it has today. Climate change, the search for a sustainable life on the planet and the struggle of various social segments – including environmentalists – have made the life and death of Chico Mendes a true milestone in our recent history.

“Supporting those who fight for the Amazon means keeping Chico Mendes’ memory and struggle alive.”



Arquivo Jacques Pena



KLEYTTON MORAIS

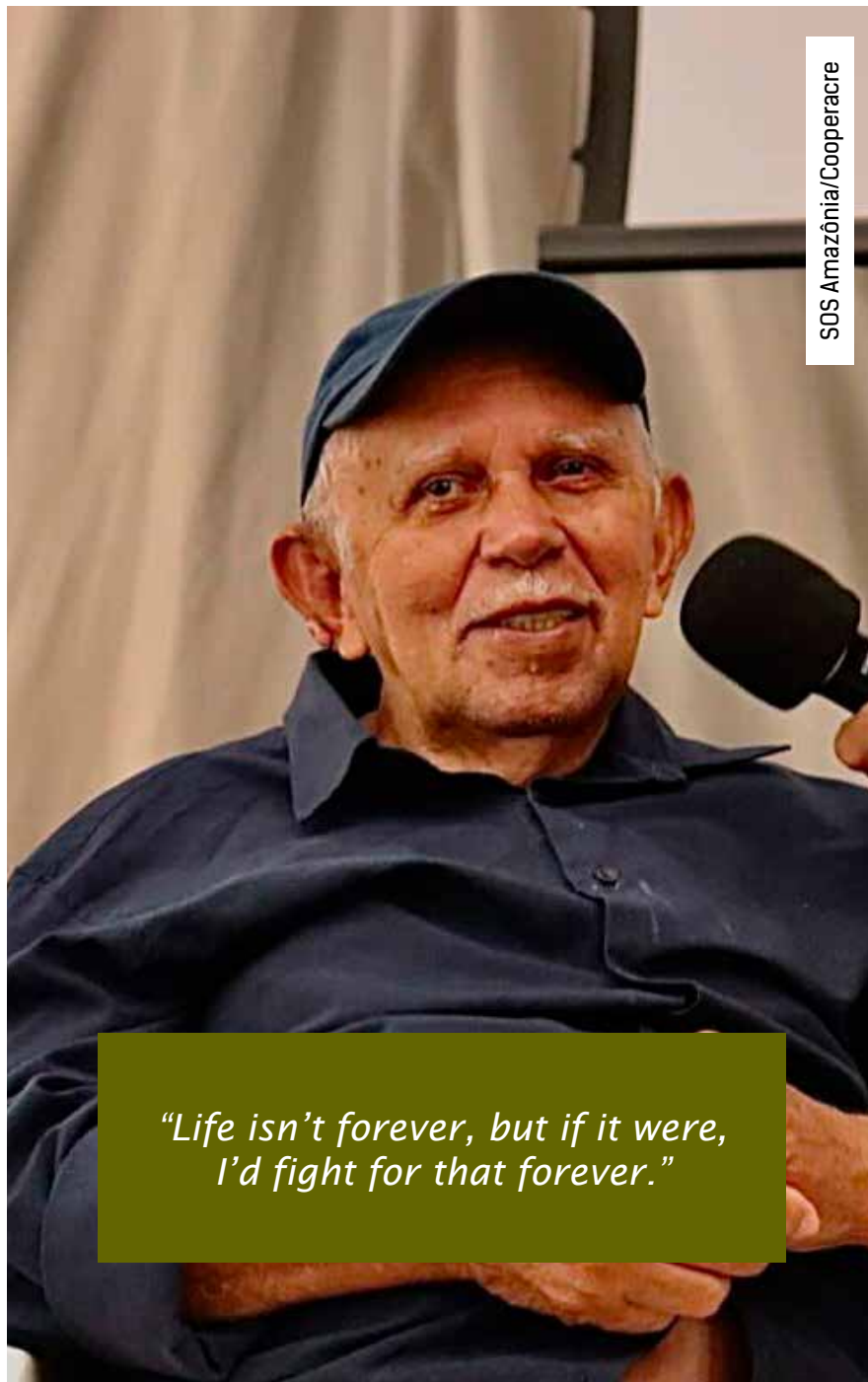
Chico Mendes left us many legacies, and I'm always learning from them. Today, there is no one who doesn't know the meaning and importance of the Extractivist Reserves, this extraordinary model of land reform adapted to the reality of the Amazon, invented and defended by Chico Mendes and his comrades. Only a movement rooted in the collective struggle of labor unions could give Brazil such a gift! But for me, who was born in Bahia and had at home the example of my uncle, Clodomir Moraes, who fought for human rights and democracy on another front of resistance, in addition to his generous heart and supportive behavior, Chico Mendes' great legacy was his incredible ability to bring together, under one banner, the trade union struggle, the political struggle and the environmental struggle. This was a lesson that changed our stance as trade unionists, not just now, but since the 1983 CUT Congress. It was there that, for the first time, Brazilian unions were called upon by a rubber tapper from the far reaches of the Amazon to incorporate the environmental agenda into our union platforms. Today, 35 years after that foretold death, in this year in which the Chico Mendes Committee, led by Angela, Chico's daughter, is calling us to take up the standoffs again for the struggles, the conquests, the militant participation in the defense of the memory and the legacy of this beacon of courage that not even a shotgun blast, fired from cover in the dead of night, was able to extinguish, I see with hope the present times and the times to come; I see with hope the arrival of happier days, with all of us fighting for this greener, healthier and more sustainable world that Chico Mendes dared to dream of. It's time, therefore, to roll up our sleeves and, with the same serene but firm spirit with which Chico Mendes confronted the violence of the latifundia, not only to stall the setbacks, but, above all, to move forward, fighting for better days for the Peoples of the Forest and for all the peoples of the Earth.



"It was with trade unionist Chico Mendes that we learned to unite our struggles under a single banner of democracy, the environment and human rights."



MANOEL JOSÉ DA SILVA



Manoel José da Silva, as he is called by his old and new comrades in resistance and by his old and new comrades in struggle, as well as by young people from the extractivist communities of Acre and other regions of the country, is a rubber tapper who has always thought and walked many steps ahead of his time. In 2001, when deforestation in the Amazon was already reaching worrying levels and extractivist populations were finding it very difficult to add value to the forest's Extractivist products, such as latex, Brazil nuts, açai, pupunha and many others, Mr. Manoel believed in the power of unity demonstrated in the struggles organized by Wilson Pinheiro and Chico Mendes in the 1970s and 1980s and, together with his comrades, invested in the organizational power of cooperatives. A visionary, he founded the Central Cooperative of Extractivist Commerce (Cooperacre), based in the state capital, Rio Branco. As a result of his entrepreneurial vision, Cooperacre is today responsible for the largest production of processed Brazil nuts in the country and brings together cooperatives of extractivists and family farmers in Acre, promoting and supporting sustainable development and the certainty of a better future. At the age of 84, and having already handed over the helm of Cooperacre to the young superintendent, Manoel Monteiro, Mr. Manoel continues to fight so that people and extractivist communities can live off what nature provides them, always honoring the legacy of Chico Mendes.





Cooperacre



MANOEL MONTEIRO DE OLIVEIRA

My story with Chico Mendes began on the rubber plantation where I was born, the São José rubber plantation, right next to the Cachoeira rubber plantation, where Chico Mendes, who was young at the time, still lived with his parents. Later, we moved to the Cachoeira rubber plantation and Chico Mendes even became a sharecropper with my father. I was brought up there, around Cachoeira. When I was four years old, my father wanted to send us all to school and left with us for Xapuri. It was at that moment that my father, the rubber tapper Luiz Tagino de Oliveira, started, along with the first 13 men from the region, my uncles on my mother's side, and Chico Mendes, who had already started his militancy there, with the idea of creating the Rural Workers' Union in Xapuri, but had previously created the Union in Brasília, at a meeting held on the Carmem rubber plantation, in 1975. That was a period of great persecution because the rubber plantations were weakening, the rubber barons were selling everything with people inside, and this process culminated in the landowners coming to Acre. The Brasília Union had already been created, and then Wilson Pinheiro was killed, which caused all that confusion. My father was being chased by the gunmen and, in order to escape, he decided to return with us to the rubber plantation. A very strong memory I have is when we returned to the Nova Esperança rubber plantation, next to Cachoeira, where my father stayed, but he went to the union a lot, because he continued to fight, together with Chico Mendes. It was during this same period that the big standoffs against deforestation began. I attended many meetings, including in the Nova Esperança community. With the creation of the Trade Unions, various meeting points were also set up and, in these places, there were the so-called union delegates. My father was a union delegate in Nova Esperança. And Chico Mendes was always at the house, practically once a month he was there, meeting and talking. I'm one of the youngest of nine siblings and I always accompanied my father to the Union meetings in Xapuri, to cut the rubber trees, because I was also a rubber tapper; to deliver

produce and buy goods. Of the many projects that Chico Mendes brought to the people of Xapuri, the fundamental one was the "Rubber Tapper Project" [Projeto Seringueiro]. I myself studied my first years at the Projeto school. I remember there was a book called "O catitu", in which the names of the animals were the key words of our daily life, of our life in the forest. That was very important for my learning, Chico's concern for education. A memorable event that influenced and motivated me to become a director of the Central Cooperative of Extractivist Products of Acre (Cooperacre) was when I once accompanied my father to the city to take our rubber production to the Cooperative. The system worked like this: we delivered our first crop to the cooperative; the cooperative sold it and when we went to deliver our second crop, we received the one we had left before. And so on. That time, the cooperative didn't have the money to pay for our previous production and, as we were in great need of goods to return to the rubber plantation for our consumption, my father had to take the rubber to sell "outside". When we went to sell at a trader's market, whose name I can't remember now, he said to my father: "Go sell to your cooperative!" He called my father a troublemaker. A union thug! He didn't buy my father's production and we returned with the rubber to the rubber plantation, until the cooperative could find the resources to pay for our production. That really upset me because we realized that it wasn't the cooperative's fault, it was the system's fault and that we needed to study management more. That's when I realized, and it stuck in my head, that I needed to go out and study in order to contribute to the Movement on this issue of cooperative management. And that was that. In 1992 I stopped cutting rubber trees and collecting chestnuts and came to the city, where my first formal job was at the Cooperative, where I stayed for five years. When I finished high school, I thought: I need to continue my studies. I came to Rio Branco on my own to work and study. I worked in the private market, in commerce as a salesman, I learned a lot interacting with rural producers, selling them a



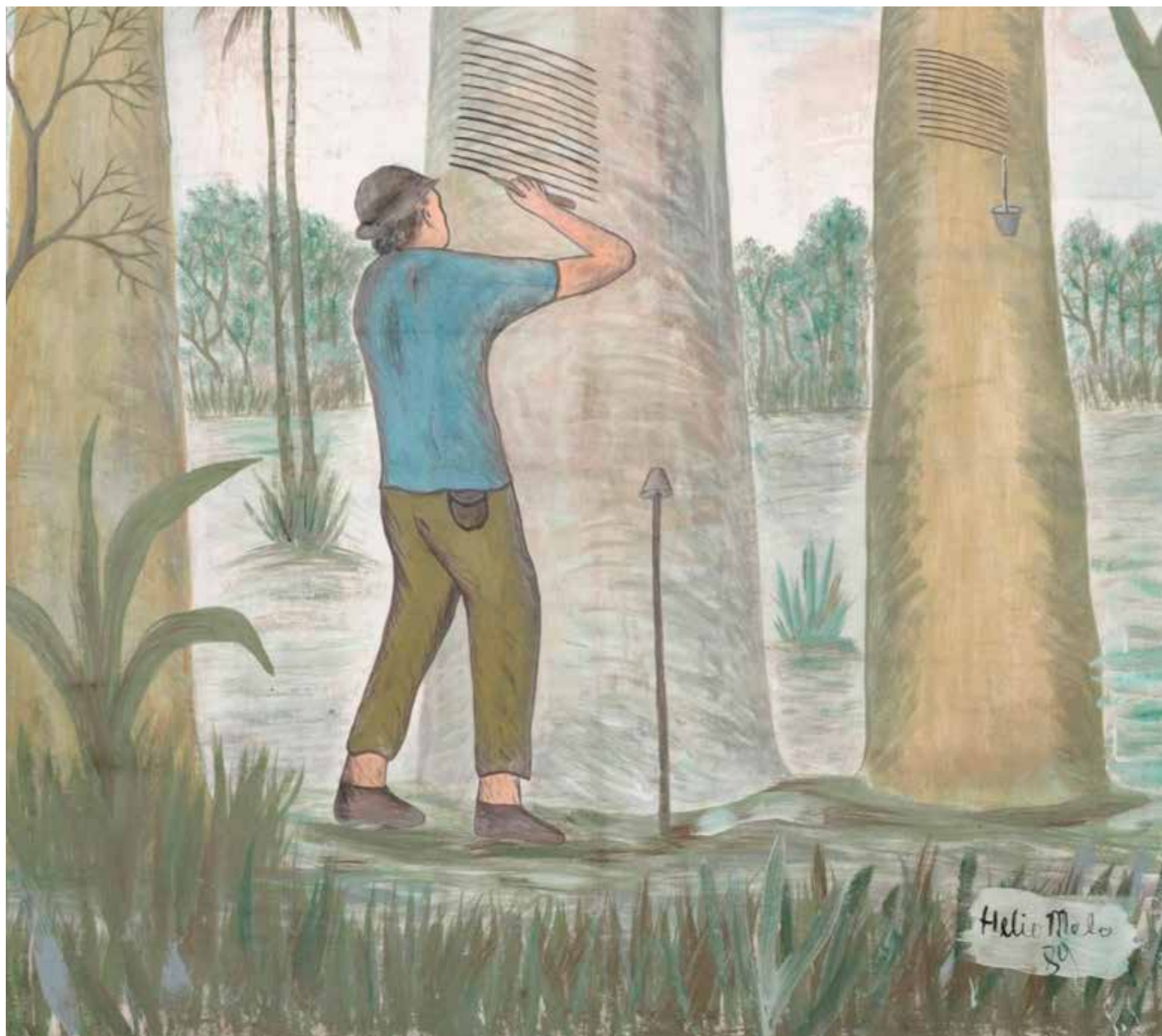
lot of agricultural equipment. At the same time, I went to university. First to study History, which I did for two years, and then Accounting. That's when an opportunity arose: I was invited by Fadel to work in the Department of Extractivism, still under Jorge Viana, in the subsidy sector. I inspected the associations' files. After a while, Fadel and Carlos Vicente asked me to contribute to the idea of creating Cooperacre. Until then, there had been no such cooperative center. That's how we started and we're now close to completing 23 years of work that has only grown and, if it's up to me, will continue to do so. Here I met a great warrior. Manoel José da Silva, a person with the same fighting style as Chico Mendes, from whom I've learned a lot over the years and of whom I'm very proud because, in a way, Cooperacre is the realization of Chico's dream. Perhaps not in the way he thought, which was to guarantee commercialization. But that wasn't all. Chico thought about the Union, the Cooperative and the School. In a way, I'm the result of what Chico wanted for the extractivists. And today, what is also important is that, as a cooperative, we are looking for a fairer price and a guarantee of purchase for extractivist products.

"At that time, in 1988, the Xapuri Agro-Extractivist Cooperative was created. I was one of those who rode on the first lap of the truck that Chico won from the BNDES project for the Cooperative."



Marcos Jorge Dias





OSMAR FACUNDO

I met Chico Mendes in 1969, on the Santa Fé rubber plantation, where he came to work with me cutting rubber trees. Then I went to the Porvir rubber plantation, on the edge of the old road to Brasiléia, and he moved with his family to the Cachoeira rubber plantation, but we continued to see a lot of each other. In 1975, Chico left our region to help organize the Brasiléia Rural Workers' Union. That was a very tough struggle, and it was from then on, with Wilson Pinheiro, that the standoffs began. At that time, the struggle was a union struggle, but it was already in defense of the forest, because we were fighting so that the rubber tapper could stay in his place. Landowners from all over the world were arriving, because there was propaganda out there saying that the land in Acre was [being sold] at a bargain price. They sold a little piece of land down there, came here and bought a farm, which most of the time didn't exist because it was all forest with rubber tappers living inside. They'd come in and play hardball with the rubber tappers, telling them to vacate the land and, when they didn't, they'd burn down their houses, set fire to their crops and even kill them and throw them in the river for the animals to eat. They did this a lot, we denounced it, but nothing happened, just more violence, just more death. So Chico's fight was against this, he had been already defending the rubber tapper against the bosses who stole from the price of rubber, he always had a lot of courage, because the bosses took from the merchandise, they took from the income, they took from the tare. We would deliver raw rubber to the rubber tapper and he would still take 10% from the rubber tapper as tare. He always stole on the count. We thought this was very sad, until the time came to fight the ranchers. Then our life here became a living hell. I heard about Chico's death on the National News [Journal Nacional]. I was in Brasiléia when the National News reported that Chico had been murdered. From there I went straight to Xapuri, I didn't even go home. At that time, the Union had just got a truck, and it went to pick up the people from the rubber plantations. Many comrades arrived, people came as they could, many people came for his

funeral. It was all very sad, very painful. Chico Mendes was the person who died to give life to many people. Before his death, the police themselves were afraid of the Alves. Everyone here was afraid of them. Chico always said that if his death was worth it to defend his comrades, he wouldn't mind dying, but he didn't think it was worth it. Yes, it was! Because the Alves were tried, convicted and served time in prison, and this led to a great reduction in violence here in Xapuri.

"Chico gave his life for us, for our struggle. So I think it's our obligation to continue fighting for this cause that cost our comrade his life."



CNS



PEDRO IVO BATISTA

I met Chico Mendes during the CUT Congress in 1988. He was introduced at a meeting of trade unionists linked to the PRC. It was a clandestine party that operated within the PT, whose experiment began in 1984 and was closed down in 1989 by comrade and friend Ozeas Duarte, at the time the PRC's national spokesman. Chico Mendes, then president of the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union and a member of the PRC/PT in that state, spoke about his struggle and that of his fellow rubber tappers. He presented the thesis "In Defense of Nature and the Peoples of the Forest", which was unanimously approved at that historic CUT Congress, turning the idea of setting up Extractivist Reserves in the Amazon into a national struggle. It was very moving to hear him defend a revolutionary and innovative proposal that is now a reality in Brazil, thanks to his martyrdom and the continuity of the struggle that turned it into public policy. Today, the Reserves preserve the forests and their traditional populations, but they need to be strengthened – especially now, with the return of a progressive, democratic and popular national government – whose president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is part of that history. In the 1980s, I was a young trade unionist and history student. I was fascinated by the account of that socio-environmental experience in the Amazon, which managed to combine the class interests of those forest workers with the defense of the environment. With this, I was able to learn more about the history of the northeasterners, particularly those from Ceará, who came to live in the Amazon, especially in Acre. I was fascinated by the life lesson given by the praxis of a rubber tapper who managed to unite the ecological struggle with the struggle of the Peoples of the Forest and the struggle against capitalism. His position is now recognized worldwide, even more so with the worsening climate crisis, demonstrating that ecology is not just for environmentalists, but for everyone who defends life on the planet. That conversation marked my life and, based on it, I decided to investigate the saga of the "Rubber Soldiers", a group of mostly northeasterners who were summoned by

the government to live in the Amazon to work on the rubber plantations to "help" Brazil with World War II. It was from the trade union movement, in 1988, that I became involved in the socio-environmental movement, where I still work today. If the left gave me class consciousness, the Forest Peoples' Movement gave me environmental consciousness. Chico Mendes' legacy is still alive today and influences the environmental movement in Brazil and around the world, encouraging those who continue to fight for a profound and emancipatory ecological transformation.



Arquivo Pedro Ivo

“Chico Mendes definitively entered human history as a leader who understood that there was no definitive socio-environmental way out of capitalism.”



SEBASTIÃO NETO

Unveiling Chico Mendes, the militant-revolutionary, is a task for those who spent time with him and particularly for those who saw him emerge, grow and shared food, joy, hardship and fear with him on a daily basis. But they also wove with him the warp of popular, trade union and political fronts of struggle, appropriate to their reality. The founding of the Workers' Party (PT) and its candidates came from a clandestine revolutionary organization, the PRC. The victories of the first standoffs, the founding of the Rural Workers' Unions, the Unified Workers' Headquarters (CUT), the fight for the Extractivist Reserves. When, after his death, progressive people on the left paid tribute to the defender of the Peoples of the Forest, Chico was sometimes referred to as a trade unionist. Little was known about the real Chico Mendes who had been murdered. Apart from a few early supporters of the Amazon's popular struggles, a few very close activists and a few political leaders, few were aware of Chico Mendes' political dimension outside Acre. What allowed a leader like Chico and his friendly and brave army of invisibles to emerge? How was it possible for such a mature leader to emerge in such difficult conditions, where the mere fact of staying alive already required an extraordinary effort from each militant? Death turned him into a legend. Chico Mendes had become known to CUT trade unionists when he approved the thesis "In defense of the Peoples of the Forest" at the III CONCUT in Belo Horizonte in September 1988. He was elected to the national leadership of the CUT by the "CUT FROM THE BASE" segment. The thesis was presented separately from the internal segments and helped to unify an absolutely sectarian plenum. In these 35 years since his disappearance, it's time to make it clear to today's young people that it was no accident that Chico Mendes wrote a note to the "young people of the future" in the conviction that they would be living in Socialism.

"I celebrate the militant-revolutionary-socialist Chico, the most visible element of a network of organization and support for the struggle of extractivist communities and Indigenous Peoples. I celebrate this record of part of a story that has not yet been told."



CSP-Conlutas



VICENTINHO

I have a very pleasant memory of Chico Mendes, in São Bernardo, on a very cold night during the 1983 CUT Congress. I watched in amazement as he and Lula drank a small cachaça [sugarcane liquor] and exchanged stories, ideas and dreams. It was beautiful to see the two of them together, a factory worker and a rubber tapper, living such different realities, but talking long into the night about how to make the world a better place. On that freezing night, Chico and Lula were there talking, looking for ways forward, dreaming of an end to violence in the countryside. They talked about the deaths of Wilson Pinheiro, in Acre, and Margarida Alves, murdered in the Northeast. They talked about how to prevent so many other deaths that had been announced. At that time, I had already been dismissed by the military dictatorship; the entire board of the São Bernardo Metalworkers' Union had been dismissed. The situation was difficult, but Chico and Lula remained firm, talking about hope! Chico Mendes had the ability to intertwine the struggles and make them a life motto. Chico Mendes' speech was not empty: he brought the practice of the suffering life of the Peoples of the Forest to the national stage. That's why we're here, 35 years later, celebrating his legacy. Chico Mendes lives!

"Chico Mendes' behavior caused astonishment and admiration among everyone, both inside Brazil and abroad. It was unusual for a rubber tapper union leader to behave like an environmentalist."



CUT Nacional





POLITICS



**OPOSIÇÃO
PRA
VALER**




MARINA **CHICO MENDES**

DEP. PED. CONSTITUINTE DEPUTADO ESTADUAL

Nº 1331 **Nº 13131**

HÉLIO PIMENTA - GOVERNADOR ★



BINHO MARQUES



CTA

Meeting Chico was one of the best gifts of my life. I was at university, in the same class as Marina Silva and Júlia Feitoza. We were studying History and working on a research project about land occupation in Acre. When I was introduced to Chico, Wilson Pinheiro had recently been killed and Chico was beginning to become the main leader of the Movement, starting in Xapuri. We went to interview him and, from that moment on, we became friends and comrades forever. Now, 35 years later, I miss him

terribly, I miss the person, the friend. Because for me Chico was a mentor, a leader, but above all he was a great and fascinating friend. I remember our first contact, wonderful and strange. Chico didn't try to impress me with knowledge that wasn't really his own, or with subjects that weren't about the forest. He talked about hunting, told stories, in a process of enchantment that he was always able to create, surprising me and all the people who lived with him throughout his life. One of the stories he told me



was about a hunt. He was waiting. A deer appeared and, when he aimed to shoot it, the deer grew, grew, and became as big as the tree he was standing in, looking him in the eye, until he ran away. I was stunned. I had never seen a serious adult, a union leader, tell a story like that with the conviction that it was true. I, who was a square, a communist militant and a left-wing dogmatist, couldn't understand it. He didn't exist in my textbooks. Our relationship became stronger in 1983, when I joined the Revolutionary Communist Party (PRC), where Chico was already a militant. That's when we began to have continuous contact. After graduating in 1984, I was assigned by the PRC to organize the comrades in Xapuri. It was very difficult at first, because I was very young and limited. It was always very frustrating, a torment, because the comrades' resistance to the PRC's model of party organization was very strong. Nothing worked and, to top it all off, Chico always ran roughshod over the Party's deliberations. Over time, and through spending time together, I learned a lot. I thought I knew a lot and that I could teach someone. But it was with Chico and in Xapuri that I began to learn many things about life. In 1986, he invited me to coordinate the Seringueiro Project. Because of my work on the project, our relationship became very close. In 1985, I stayed in Xapuri directly, helping with his campaign for mayor. That's when I got to know Chico better, his way of relating. I was able to understand how he could mobilize people and really be a leader. I discovered that Chico was, in fact, a completely different leader from the traditional leaders I knew. [He was] A leader that didn't have an exciting speech, that didn't have a strong oratory, that, in our language, didn't have flourishes, didn't make a fuss. He was complex, but not complicated. He managed to do the hardest thing: be simple. Chico Mendes was simple and humble, completely detached from possessions, wealth, everything. He was a socialist, totally committed to his cause. He believed in a new world, a just world. This was the guiding principle of his

"Chico was a true politician. At that time there was no talk of ecology in Acre. The militancy of our Party was completely red. There was nothing green about it. We were traditional left-wing militants. It was Chico who brought green into our lives."

actions throughout his life. The ecological movement, the environment: that was natural. In fact, it was the result of his life as a rubber tapper, of his knowledge of nature. And it never came as a speech. It was the practice of life: that was his relationship with nature. So it is with the Indians. So it is with rubber tappers. Chico later discovered that what was already inside him was a banner, an international banner. He knew very well how to make an interesting connection between the environmental cause and his principles. He combined his experience as a rubber tapper with his life choice, which was the cause of [supporting] the weakest. Chico found it very difficult to put his ideas across within the PT and the CUT. His cause wasn't the workers' cause, it wasn't the workers' cause of the Brazilian trade union model. I remember when he finally managed to get a thesis into the CUT,

defending an agrarian reform that was specific and different for the Amazon. That was the great beginning. It was the beginning of change. He had realized that our struggle carrying the banners of other militant groups didn't fit in with our way of being, with our way of life. And so, gradually, the movement that became this new kind of movement was born: a Socio-Environmental Movement, which has taken the world by storm and which guides all our work. An ideal that the PT, the CUT and the Brazilian social movements later came to support. Chico had a rare intelligence,

a greater ability to listen than anyone else. Before striking up a conversation with a stranger, he would first get the essence of the person. He had a flirtatious way of introducing the conversation, of winding it up, of pulling the thread until he got to know the person he was talking to. Because conversation with Chico was always dialogue. He was never a fan of monologues, he never spoke without knowing what the person was interested in hearing and he never missed an opportunity to learn from a conversation. That's why Chico wasn't just extremely intelligent. He was, in fact, the intellectual of the Movement. A lot of people don't believe that. I talk to people who think that we deified Chico





out of a need for militancy, that we turned Chico into a hero to strengthen our struggle. We continue to say that Chico was not a person from another world, a person who placed himself above others. His leadership came from his ability to put himself out there like everyone else. He was always on people's side and not above anyone else. This was his greatest merit. That was the strength of his leadership. And his intelligence was also unmistakable. Chico Mendes built a Movement. He led us and had authority over us. At no time, not me, with all my student arrogance; not Marina [Silva], not Júlia [Feitoza], none of us had any power over him. The authority was his. He was the leader of the Movement. And as much as I particularly resisted his way of solving things, I ended up bowing to the Chico Mendes way of being. In 1988, I left the PRC thanks to what I had learned from Chico. I left and he stayed. Perhaps I learned his teachings much more than he did. But Chico knew how to stay in a left-wing party and do things his way, and I didn't. I thought that, to stay in a left-wing party, I had to do things my way. I thought that to stay in a party, you had to follow the guidelines faithfully. When I saw that I couldn't do it anymore, I left. With Chico, we had the opportunity to build a kind of parallel government because, at the time, public services were for very few people. Personally, this was the greatest experience I've ever had, at a time when there was no government for the poorest. In the Amazon, if the poor didn't even have a government in the urban centers, imagine what was coming into the forest interior, especially for

the Indians and rubber tappers. So, we began to build alternatives for schools, health care and the economy, where there was nothing. It was a great learning experience that I still carry with me today. Learning to do a lot with little is a lesson you don't learn at school. In fact, we built schools with our arms, with the strength of the communities. We managed to make a teacher out of someone who could barely read. We managed to make a lot of people literate, and today the human and social capital we have in Xapuri was built on the work experience of the Social Movement led by Chico. When Chico died, I was practically fighting with him. I couldn't understand the way he conducted things. In reality, I didn't learn all my lessons from Chico while he was still alive. I learned a lot from Chico after his death. The chips fell little by little. Some of it I learned while spending time with him but the rest I discovered in a way that is very difficult to explain. I discovered it day by day, in his (absent) presence. Above all, I discovered that the most difficult problems require the simplest solutions. I think Chico's teachings are still very relevant today. That doesn't mean persisting in a movement like the one we had. It means insisting on the idea of not following any finished model. Chico Mendes must remain an example for all of us, but we mustn't forget that there are many Chicos. All with the same capacity, which we sometimes don't see. There is a lot of leadership out there ready to take on new and challenging responsibilities. Perhaps we need to trust more and place new bets.





CUT Nacional



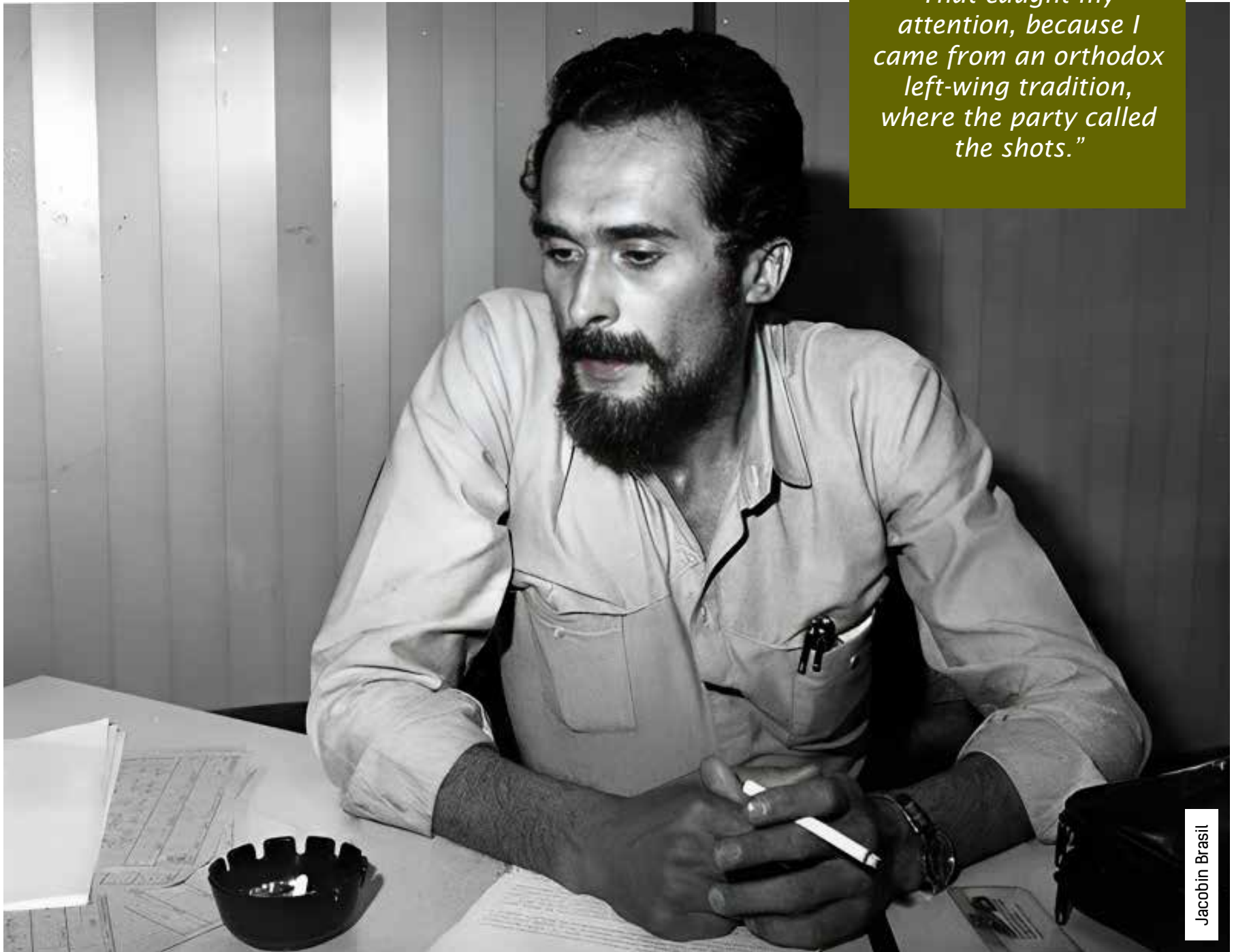
JOSÉ GENOÍNO

I first met Chico Mendes in 1980. At that time, I was leaving the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and we started organizing a dissident party, the Revolutionary Communist Party (PRC), and I was responsible for contacting Acre, where I made a remarkable trip because Chico took me to Brasília to visit the union where Wilson Pinheiro had been killed. Then we crossed the river by boat, went to Bolivia to see Cobija and returned to Xapuri. On that first trip to Acre, when I spent the night talking about the Guerrilla in Araguaia, he said: "The problem with Araguaia was that you were outsiders and you remained outsiders. In Araguaia there were rubber tappers, chestnut growers, bushrangers and miners. Why didn't you get together with them instead of waging guerrilla war on your own? With people like these, you couldn't have remained isolated!" He immediately realized the guerrilla's mistake. I argued that it took time, that it took years. Chico's response was surprising: "What's the problem? What's the matter if you have to spend a lifetime? If you want to make a revolution, spend time!" By this I mean that Chico Mendes' time was different. It wasn't our time. He told you to spend a lifetime becoming a rubber tapper. He didn't have the rush of militancy that we had. For him, the result was secondary. In the PT and the CUT, people didn't know what the Peoples of the Forest struggle was all about. Relations between capital and labor, wage increases, unemployment, layoffs: that was the agenda of the PT and the CUT. So, it seemed very exotic. At a meeting, we agreed that he would ask to speak and put his thesis in the form of a motion. Chico Mendes speaking calmly, serenely, simply, and the CUT, without realizing it, making history. When I went to Acre for the second time, we went around Rio Branco and Xapuri. And he knew everyone. He had a very personal and simple way of being friends with everyone. Chico was always cheerful: he was a good person, detached, unassuming. On one of my trips to Acre, through him, I met Dom Moacyr Grechi, Marina Silva and Nilson Mourão. Another thing that struck me about Chico

was that he didn't care much about formal representation. He was a natural leader and that was that. When Chico died, I was out of sorts, I was in a very bad shape. It was the end of the year and I was with my family in Itanhaém, São Paulo. The next day, I flew to Rio Branco. Deep down I couldn't believe it. I was hoping for a different outcome. What remains for me as an example of Chico Mendes' life is his personal integrity, his ability to dedicate himself to others. It was with him that what later became government with Jorge Viana began in Acre, followed by Binho Marques. I'm amazed to see this seed that Chico planted. He believed in struggle, in revolution, but his utopia was different. He absorbed everything, but translated our proposals in his own way and for his world. Chico defended the jungle, the rubber tree and the Brazil nut tree, but his entire entry into the environmental debate was based on defending the forest as a means of survival and subsistence for the Peoples of the Forest. The environmental issue entered Chico's life through the door of social rights and the people of the Union. He had a mystique of struggle, of involvement with the struggle and? and, above all, the people who were doing the fighting. His work was in the form of a dispersed organization. It wasn't a plenary session or an assembly. It was done with the groups that were isolated in the forest, and he did politics like that: visiting group after group in the middle of the forest. One day I gave Chico Mendes a book as a present. It was "Guerrilla Warfare in Brazil", with the guerrilla schemes and photos. Chico was fascinated by these matters of revolution. He said it reminded him of the time he learned to read and learn about politics from an old communist, Euclides Távora, in the middle of the forest. When Ilzamar became pregnant with their first child, Chico and I talked a lot about Helenira Resende, the student movement, her experience at the National Union of Students (UNE), and how she died a heroine in Araguaia. In a way, I helped Chico choose the name of that child he loved so much, Elenira.



"Chico didn't care about having power. That caught my attention, because I came from an orthodox left-wing tradition, where the party called the shots."



JÚLIA FEITOZA DIAS

I was born on the Bom Destino rubber plantation, in the municipality of Rio Branco. I am the daughter of rubber tappers, a father from Pernambuco and a mother from Amazonas. I don't know how my father ended up in Acre, let alone on the rubber plantation, because rubber tappers from Pernambuco were not common in that region. I lived on the rubber plantation until I was ten. When my father died, my mother and I came to the city. I remember my first trip well. It was a six-hour boat ride. The river was beautiful, full. There were lots of ingá trees in the ravine, and we would pass by and pick inga fruit with our hands. Then there was the feeling of entering a big city, with so many people, so many lights. I stayed in Rio Branco for a while and then went to Rio de Janeiro, where I spent ten years. On my return to Acre, in 1979, I began my activism in the Church, still during the military dictatorship. There were many youth groups in the Catholic Church, and I joined one of them. The church was a space where we could discuss politics. We discussed the Communist Party Manifesto and surplus value. We ran from the Federal Police a lot. Before university, in youth groups, we learned to work with theater. We created a group, Fragmentos, and with it we put on our first play, "Alegria". Then we put on other plays: "In defense of the Amazon", and one in defense of children, "The Shoeshiner". We produced everything ourselves. The script for "In defense of the Amazon" was by Professor Edegard de Deus; "The Shoeshiner" was a collective production and "Alegria" was by comrade Maués, who has since passed away. With the creation of UFAC, many professors came from abroad, almost all of them militants, and we joined them. And together – professors, youth groups and activists from popular movements – we began to fight for various causes: for the Amazon, against the Jari Project, and in defense of the rubber tappers who were being expelled from their allotments. At that time, all our political actions were guided by the Revolutionary Communist Party (PRC). We had a single objective: to bring about the Revolution. The strikes, starting with the São Paulo workers, were signs that we would succeed.

And to think that if we can't act quickly even today, imagine at the time, in a huge country like ours. But we firmly believed in the "Revolution" we were preparing. We thought we could turn the PT into a revolutionary party. Little by little, we realized among the PT's militants that this "Revolution" was becoming more and more distant and, over time, the PRC ended up dying out. But one thing we all learned from the PRC was to do things with determination. That capacity for decision that we have, that if we have a task to do, we do it, that was the good legacy that the PRC left in our lives. Chico Mendes was also from the PRC. Although we were from the same party, for security reasons, we didn't know who the other comrades were. We had no contact with the Trade Union Movement cell, which was Chico's. We knew we had to support the Trade Unions. We knew we had to support the unions, but we didn't know who was in the party. I only met Chico in person in 1980, when I was still a student studying History and, together with Marina Silva and Binho Marques, we went to Xapuri to do a study on the lands of Acre. We became closer during the founding of the PT and then, in 1983, 1984, when we closed ranks around the Seringueiro Project. The Seringueiro Project had been founded by a group from the University, led by Mary Allegretti, who spent around two months teaching on the Nazaré rubber plantation, in Rio Branco, where Raimundão [Raimundo Barros] was her student. But then the project staff split up and left. And Chico that convinced us to resume the project. A small team had been left functioning, precariously. That's when we founded the CTA, to run the Seringueiro Project. We worked hard, often without any money. The little money we sometimes got was for practical efforts, never for salaries. For example, the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) built the schools, the Secretary of Education paid for the training, but nobody paid our salaries, so we never had any money. And when someone received a stipend, the money was always split between one, two or three people. It was always like this: people came, and before they weren't even teachers, they were monitors following

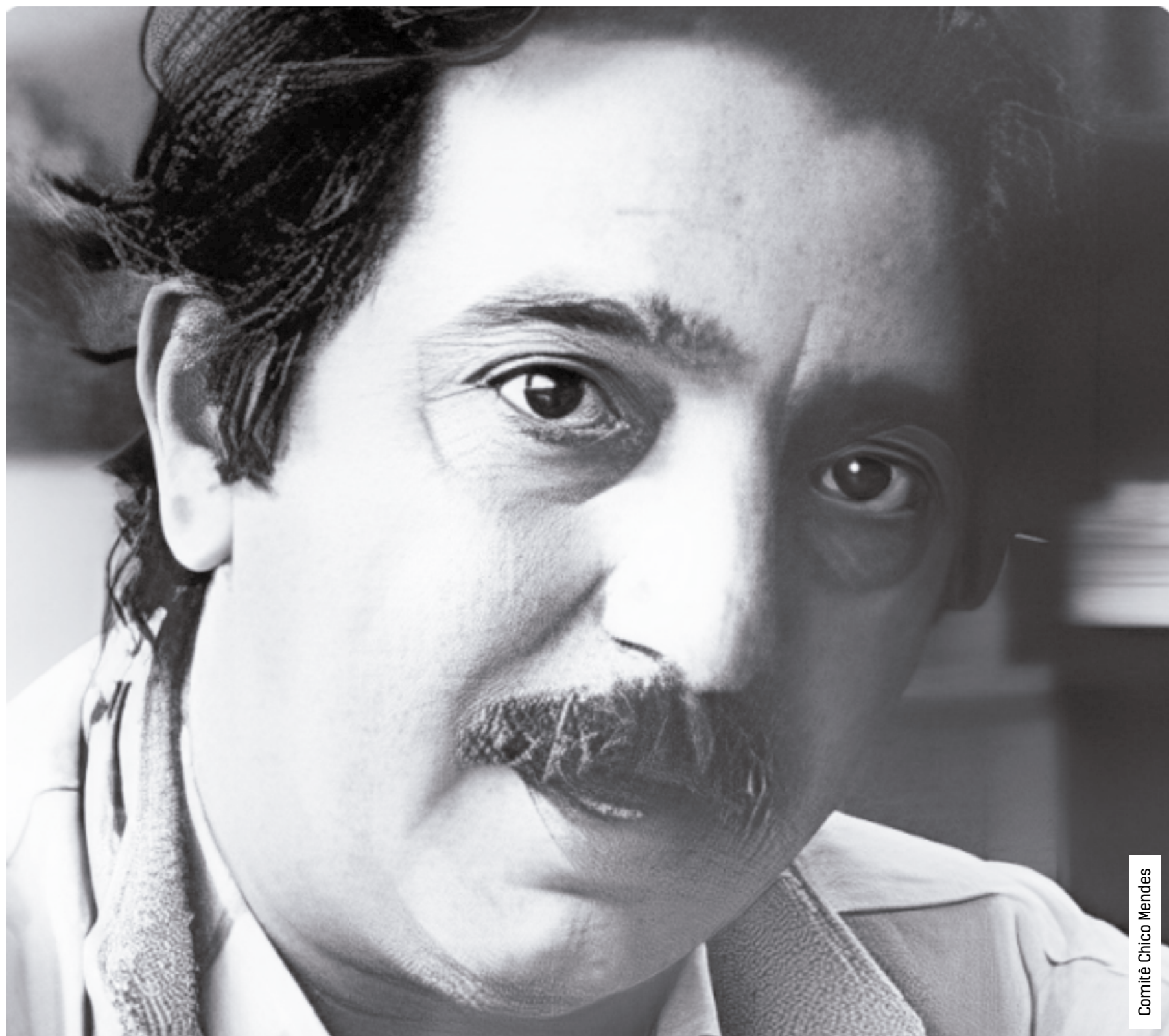


the terminology and logic of the Church. Most of the time the monitors came as volunteers, without pay and depending a lot on the organization of the community. Sometimes they could teach on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, other times every two weeks. Sometimes the students came for one week a month. And then the people who were already literate, who could grasp the content, would also teach. As the initial schools were held in people's own homes, it was a very nice process, very strong, with a lot of solidarity. As we used the Paulo Freire method, the keywords were struggle, union, deputy. You only have to look at the first booklets to see that you didn't have to say much, you just had to use the booklets. Meanwhile, we at the University always found a way to invite Chico, because he was very didactic and always a good speaker. There has always been violence in Acre's history, but the situation went to the extreme when the "paulistas" started arriving here. The rubber barons sold their land to the paulistas, who often didn't even come here, but sent their enforcers who, covered by the police, expelled the rubber tappers from their land. And we, without weapons, in unequal conditions, still thought we could make a revolution. We made a short film – Us and Them (us, the people from Acre, and them, the people from São Paulo) – which obviously didn't have a license from the censors. And with that we got into a lot of trouble. With us, in the city, the pressure was more psychological. They took pictures of us, upset our families, but they didn't kill us. It was different in the Union. [The union] received the bullet. Wilson Pinheiro was organizing Lula's arrival for a rally in Brasília. When Lula arrived on the scheduled date, it was already Wilson's seventh-day mass. Chico was a person who wrote a lot to newspapers, politicians and even the Pope when he thought it could help. Through these contacts, he began to travel a lot, but he didn't want to be away from Xapuri at the end of the year, and we all really wanted him to leave Acre for a while. But he argued that he couldn't, that he couldn't go away, because that could weaken the struggle.



"Anyone who reads Chico Mendes' diaries can see that he was simple and unassuming, but not disorganized. At every meeting he held, he always started by writing on the board: 'The victory of our struggle depends on our discipline and our organization', even though he wasn't the most obedient of people."





Comité Chico Mendes



MARCUS BARROS

My history with Chico Mendes is the result of my visits to Acre, when I received invitations from social movements. It was the early 1970s and, when I visited the state, I always worked with social movements linked to the Church of Liberation Theology, represented by Dom Moacyr Grechi. Chico Mendes was part of all these movements. Then came the times of resistance and the advance of the rubber tapper movement. But what brought us together was the great effort we made to organize the PRC here in Amazonas, where we tried to bring militants from Acre. This brought me closer to Chico Mendes and Marina Silva. We did some work here and then headed for Acre. I got involved in grassroots work through medicine, taking care of endemic diseases like malaria, but I always linked my work to political activism. My professional work, my scientific side, was what camouflaged my political side at the time. In those harsh times of the military dictatorship, mixing the Church with the PRC was our form of resistance. Amazonas sought the support of social movements linked to the Church, and it was from this mixture at the time of the repression that Chico moved towards standoffs, environmental policy and the Extractivist Reserves: all of this began with a very close relationship based on resistance to the dictatorship. My relationship with Chico didn't have the emotional depth of those who lived with him on a day-to-day basis, but we were thrilled by his achievements and wept with his defeats, along with the whole Movement.

"The years after 1988 have been a time of suffering due to Chico's disappearance. At that time, we from Amazonas were in Acre's wake, we saw Acre as our libertarian alternative."



Comité Chico Mendes



MARINA SILVA

I met Chico when I was 17 years old. I was a very shy girl, living in a convent. I kept hearing more conservative people say that Bishop Moacyr Grechi was a communist who, together with Contag and “that guy Chico Mendes”, encouraged people to move against the landowners. I heard this many times. It was strange to me because I knew that Chico Mendes was a rubber tapper and the fact that I was the daughter of rubber tappers and came from a rubber plantation made me curious to understand why those who fought against the felling and burning of houses, against the eviction of people and against the violence – of which there was a lot – were considered bad people, communists and against God. One day I was at Mass when I saw a cardboard sign on the church door, written with a magic marker: “CPT rural leadership course, Saturday and Sunday, with the presence of Clodovis Boff [a friar, like his brother Leonardo Boff, one of the exponents of Liberation Theology] and Chico Mendes.” When Mass was over, I went to the sacristy and signed up. I told my Mother Superior about my desire to do a course in the Church on Saturday and Sunday. She wanted to know what that course was, and I said: “It’s a course that the priest wants us to do.” The course took place in the parish hall. There were about 25 people, including several rural leaders. I was one of the youngest present. Clodovis was the first to speak and he made a correlation with the Sermon on the Mount – the idea that faith had to produce fruit, otherwise it was a dead faith. Then came Chico Mendes. He talked about how meetings were held to organize unions and explained how he managed to both help Contag form unions and lead a grassroots community. He jokingly said that he did a three-in-one job: “It’s the same people. First, we get everyone together and say: now it’s the grassroots community meeting. Then it’s over and we forget everything to start the union meeting. And then we forget again and start the political reflection meeting to think about creating a party.” That captivated me. There was also a little theater. I took part enthusiastically and was chosen to give a report. As it was

in the tradition of my father and grandmother, I gave the report in the form of a Cordel poem. Chico liked it very much, sat down next to me, got the Convent’s phone and asked if he could send me information about the workers’ struggle. And he started sending newsletters, the Varadouro newspaper and another newspaper called O Movimento. And it was all hidden away in my little room. After the course, I lost contact with everyone in the CPT, except Chico. The attention Chico gave me, the fact that he fed me that different world of struggles and ideals, changed my life path. I thought I was going to be a nun, but I started asking myself a lot of questions. I found myself in a terrible conflict. After much reflection, I asked to speak to the Mother Superior and announced that I no longer wanted to be a nun and that I would like to leave the convent to work with the grassroots communities. From there, I went to the Estação Experimental neighborhood, to live with my uncle Aurelio, my mother’s brother. I went to Father João Carlos, at the Parish of the Risen Christ, and started working as a monitor in the most active grassroots community in Rio Branco. After six months, I was made the parish’s grassroots coordinator. I was already attending more meetings; I went to university; I became more deeply involved in social issues; and spending more and more time with Chico formed a strong friendship. It was through him that, together with Binho [Marques], I joined the PRC. I asked him who the party’s theoreticians were in the Amazon, and he replied: “There are several comrades, all very good!” He thought for a moment and continued: “There’s Marcus Barros.” Marcus, who was a professor at the Federal University of Amazonas (Ufam), was the intellectual he used as a reference for everything. I met Marcus through Chico Mendes. Usually, there’s a very intolerant attitude and a very superficial view towards the anxiety and restlessness of young people. My experience with Chico was a lesson in this respect. His gaze was genuinely interested, patient, careful and stimulating. My story, Binho’s story – and that of so many people who spent time with him – shows how Chico respected young





Elson Martins



people and was always concerned with drawing young people into his struggle. For me, this showed the sensitivity of a person who lived in a very difficult social and economic situation. He was always on a tightrope of pressure and threats, but he was extremely light-hearted. I think Chico's way of staying young was to relate to young people. I felt he was a mixture of father and brother. He was paternal when he transmitted the firmness of maturity, commitments and responsibilities. He was a brother because he put things on an equal footing. He didn't impose his thinking; he dialogued with our ideas. We had the affinity of being forest people. An affinity that didn't even need to be said. The conversation flowed because it was the same universe, we knew who we were, what our roots were, where we belonged. This helped me a lot not to lose my roots. I remember when I went to the registry office to get my birth certificate. The girl asked where I was born, and I said: Bagaço Rubber Plantation. She insisted that I put Rio Branco: "Don't say you were born on the rubber plantation, my child. That's very ugly. People will make fun of you." As I resisted, she ended up going along with it. In part, I owe this to Chico, who criticized those who came to the city and hid their origins, ashamed of being considered ugly, illiterate, ignorant, crude. For him, being a rubber tapper had great dignity and should be displayed with pride. For me, the fact that a person like him thought this only reinforced the feeling I've always had, of never hiding my origins. In 1985 we held a meeting to discuss the PT's candidacies, especially Chico's candidacy for state representative. I don't remember that moment very well, because it was already clear that Chico had to run in 1986 for two main reasons: he would play an important role in institutionalizing our causes; and, once elected, he could count on more security, since he was under constant death threats. We thought it would be more difficult to kill a member of parliament. We decided to run as a double ticket. Chico for State Congressman and I for Federal, for the National Constituent Assembly. We had no campaign experience, no structure and



Arquivo Marina Silva

no money. Jorge Viana came on vacation from UnB [University of Brasília], took his father's car and gasoline and drove around non-stop. Binho had a beetle that almost broke down during the campaign. We graffitied walls, made creative posters with our slogan: "Marina and Chico Mendes: real opposition!" The election program was recorded live. We had one minute. Chico spoke for 30 seconds, and I spoke for the other 30. We had enormous difficulties. We couldn't go to all the places in the state. Chico didn't even go to Cruzeiro do Sul, because there was a lot of slander coming from Manaus, from Gilberto Mestrinho's people, who were preaching the distribution of chainsaws. They said on the radio that Chico was a dangerous agitator, but our campaign began to have a very good impact – so much so that Chico was



almost elected. About 150 votes short. I got the fifth most votes, but the PT didn't get enough [for me to be elected]. Once a left-wing leader came to talk to rubber tapper leader Chico Mendes and was very disappointed! Chico started telling him ghost stories, about a trip he had taken at night and suddenly heard strange noises. He shivered and the bush moved in a whirlwind. [He said] that it was the "caboclo da mata [mythical figure]", and he had no tobacco to appease the Caipora's fury. As he spoke, the person became uneasy, not understanding how a communist, who should be a materialist, could be so mystical. It was very funny! Chico had contacts in Rio de Janeiro like [Alfredo] Sirkis, [Carlos] Minc, Rosa Roldán, Lucélia Santos, [Fernando] Gabeira: in São Paulo he talked to Lula, [José] Genoíno, Fábio Feldman, and Mary Allegretti, from Curitiba. These people brought a new outlook, a new meaning to the struggle, based on the example of the peasant struggles taking place in the South, Southeast and Northeast. When Chico, in conversations with outsiders, understood that the Movement could have another dimension, he started talking about a specific agrarian reform for the Amazon, and that the biome should not repeat the models used in other regions. This was not accepted very well. Talks of "ideological deviation" began, that Chico was embarking on a petty bourgeois discourse and environmentalism was "American stuff." In a way, Binho and I took on the task of not allowing Chico to be so exposed to this. I was very curious about this new way of looking at things and tried hard to follow his reasoning, even though I heard – from the other side – that he was going off the deep end. But Chico, at the same time as he sought help from the PT, was also talking to many other people: both from Acre and abroad. Little by little,

"Chico was very good at talking, but he wasn't good on the stage. He spoke like a conversationalist. He spoke with his hands, with gestures. He'd get up on the stage and talk to all those people down there. He liked to tell stories, "causos". He had some beliefs, some stories about the bush."

we made the same shift with him. We were also detaching ourselves from that pure trade union vision. It was very good for me. I learned a lot about the importance of listening, of looking for various points of view, of diverse responses, of seeking alliances with other segments, other people. Our problem wasn't just ours; it was interconnected with many other things and we had to have a lot of dialogue to find a solution. When Chico went to the United States, we thought of that it could only benefit our cause. He denounced the damage to the forest and the Peoples of the Forest caused by the actions of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), which financed roads being built without any environmental care. After that, the bank completely changed its methodology. When he returned with the Global 500 Award, everyone was hopeful that this recognition would help protect his life. Chico's trip to the United States was organized by Mary Allegretti, environmentalist Steve Schwartzman and filmmaker Adrian Cowell. These people were of great importance to the

Movement and to Chico Mendes' struggle. Chico was never an aggressive person, even in the most difficult situations. It was like a mineiro's [from Minas Gerais] demeanor: calm, slow-speaking. He always started like this: "We're here because we want to explain to you..." In the Bordon farm standoff, the tension was very high. He and I went to talk to the "gato", who commanded the laborers. Chico, very meek: "I know you're not the farmer and you're here because you're also exploited. So, I'd like you to understand that what you're doing isn't good. I'd also like to say to the comrades who are deforesting the land that, until recently, they were on the allotment. Since they lost the land, now they're earning a daily wage so they can cut it down..." It



was incredible, because they were trying to overcome Chico and he was there, teaching, talking to everyone. In this Bordon standoff, Military Police (MPs) officers were supporting the deforestation. When we arrived and spread out among the trees, Chico had told us that if the MPs made any moves towards us, everyone was to sing the National Anthem. While Chico was talking to the “gato”, the MPs advanced. When the National Anthem rose from the forest, they stopped. Once the anthem was over, they were more willing to talk. And at that point, following Chico’s instructions, we began to say the Lord’s Prayer out loud, holding hands, even with the police. The situation for them was highly embarrassing, and the result was that we managed to call a halt to the deforestation, to form a committee and talk to the people from the Brazilian Forestry Development Institute (IBDF) in Xapuri. One of Chico’s characteristics was that he was deeply peaceful. We never had any arguments. Our disagreements were always tenuous. At the end of 1988, a week before I went to São Paulo to try a treatment for hepatitis B, I spent a few days in Xapuri – staying at Chico’s house – as I always did. Today, when I think about it, I get very emotional. It was a relationship of such trust, of such fraternity, that in that small house, which only had one room, he and Ilza would shelter me next to their bed, on a mattress, close to the children. Most of the time, in fact, it was Chico who slept on the floor, and I stayed in bed with Ilza and one of the children. I spent about three days in that same little house where he was murdered. When I was leaving, he accompanied me to the bus station. We were talking there and he said to me: “Nega véia” – which was how he called me – “I don’t think there’s any way this time.” I made a gesture of annoyance. But he continued, very seriously: “There’s no way. I think they’re are going to get me.” We walked off in a disturbing silence. Very distressed, I tried to find a way out: “Why don’t you talk to the people in Rio Branco and make a complaint?” And he: “It’s no use. When I do that, they say I want to promote myself, make a martyr of myself. Even the journalists

make fun of it.” I felt a deep pain, because he was cornered, without any protection, and discouraged. I arrived in São Paulo and stayed at my husband Fábio’s relatives’ house in Ribeirão Pires, looking for a naturopathic doctor. I went for a consultation, he prescribed natural remedies for hepatitis, and I left feeling good. When it was about 10 o’clock at night, it was freezing cold, the phone rang. It was Gilson, Fábio’s cousin. The first thing he said to me was: “Stay calm”. I replied: “Did they kill Chico Mendes?” He asked: “How do you know?” The conversation ended there. I couldn’t say anything anymore. We didn’t immediately get any money to buy a ticket back to Rio Branco. Fábio and I only managed to get there for the 7th day mass. A week had passed, but the phones at the PT, at the Union, kept ringing. People from all over the country and the world wanted information. At one of these moments, we were in the parish hall of the cathedral in Rio Branco and a group of American parliamentarians arrived. One of them was Al Gore. They came to show solidarity with the Movement and the family. Al Gore’s attitude was very striking to me. That tall, very white man, purple from the heat, his shirt all wet with sweat, was leading the group. He wanted to know how to help, but in a very simple way, without ostentation, respecting the people and circumstances. He was sincere. When he later made the documentary “An Inconvenient Truth” and won the Nobel Prize, many people thought he was just using the environmental cause to promote himself. In the interest of fairness, I’ve always testified that he’s been on this road for a long time. Today, thinking about everything that has happened since Chico’s death, the gaze and presence of a person who constituted ethical and innovative political processes when everything seemed impossible is sorely missed. To imagine that one day Lula would become President of the Republic, that Jorge would be Governor of Acre; that Binho, who was a boy from the Rubber Tapper Project, would also be Governor; that Nilson Mourão would be a Federal Congressman and that I, who found it hard to imagine myself as a Rio Branco





Arquivo Marina Silva

councilwoman, would be a Senator of the Republic and, twice, Minister of the Environment in President Lula's governments! There are certain causes that Marina Silva seems to take care of, because they make so much sense that nothing can hold us back, there are no ties. Chico could have spent some time outside Acre to escape the death threats. There was no shortage of invitations, even from other countries. He could at least have spent that Christmas in 1988 in Rio de Janeiro, as his friends there insisted, but he couldn't imagine being exiled from Acre, from Xapuri, especially during Christmas, because Ilza and the children would be alone. And there would also be the mass, the meeting, the comrades who always came from the bush to the city at this time of year, and it would be a great opportunity to talk. He could have made another choice, but there is a place of desire, of will, which is sometimes so strong that it overrides even the very need to survive. And if he had only listened to the pure reason of convenience or self-preservation, he wouldn't have been Chico Mendes!



TIÃO VIANA

In fact, when Chico was setting up this Movement, transforming the defense of the Peoples of the Forest into an action to defend the Environment, in a process compatible with human dignity, with respect for all the beings that live around us, I was back in Belém, studying Medicine, participating in the student movement, and already thinking about how, on my return, to carry out a health reform here in Acre. I was following the conflict and the innovative agenda that Acre was experiencing from a distance. I met Chico Mendes at one of the many meetings about direct elections, between 1983 and 1984, at the time of the "Direct Elections Now" movement. I had my first conversations with him at the Varadouro newspaper offices. We had other conversations together at the headquarters of the Rural Workers' Union, where Abraham Farhat, or Lhé, was also a militant. On other occasions, I met Chico at the various militant meetings that were taking place in Rio Branco at the time. The longest and most in-depth conversation I had with him was on a flight from Rio Branco to Brasília, a couple of months before he died, where I was able to hear his concerns about what was happening in Acre, about the difficulties the rubber extraction industry was going through, especially after the entry of cattle ranching into our state; and also about the violence and threats he himself was suffering. With that different viewpoint that Chico gave me, the tone of our conversation really struck me. Chico presented the revolution of simplicity, of humility; his greatness and strength was precisely in his humility, his simplicity, but with ideas capable of reaching and touching everyone from the simplest people to the country's greatest leaders, because he expressed an idea of happiness through the attitude of organizing, resisting, defending and believing in human strength and greatness. All this contaminated my generation, which was also influenced by the organization of workers by the intellectual movement that created the PT, the workers' movement that created the PT, the grassroots movement that created the PT, and the student movement that I helped to create, in the transition from the

dictatorship to the re-democratization of Brazil. So, I'm a character and an apprentice in this history. This has been the fantastic side of my life, and these fundamentals are definitely incorporated into my human values, my ethical values and my dream of living happily in the Amazon and in our Acre, where I know we are still going to build the best life indicators in Brazil, because for the problems we have to face, we have the lessons learned from Chico Mendes at our fingertips.



Arquivo Tião Viana

"In my land, Acre, Chico Mendes strengthened a whole movement for human rights, in defense of the forest and its peoples and, as he himself said, for humanity."





ENVIRONMENT



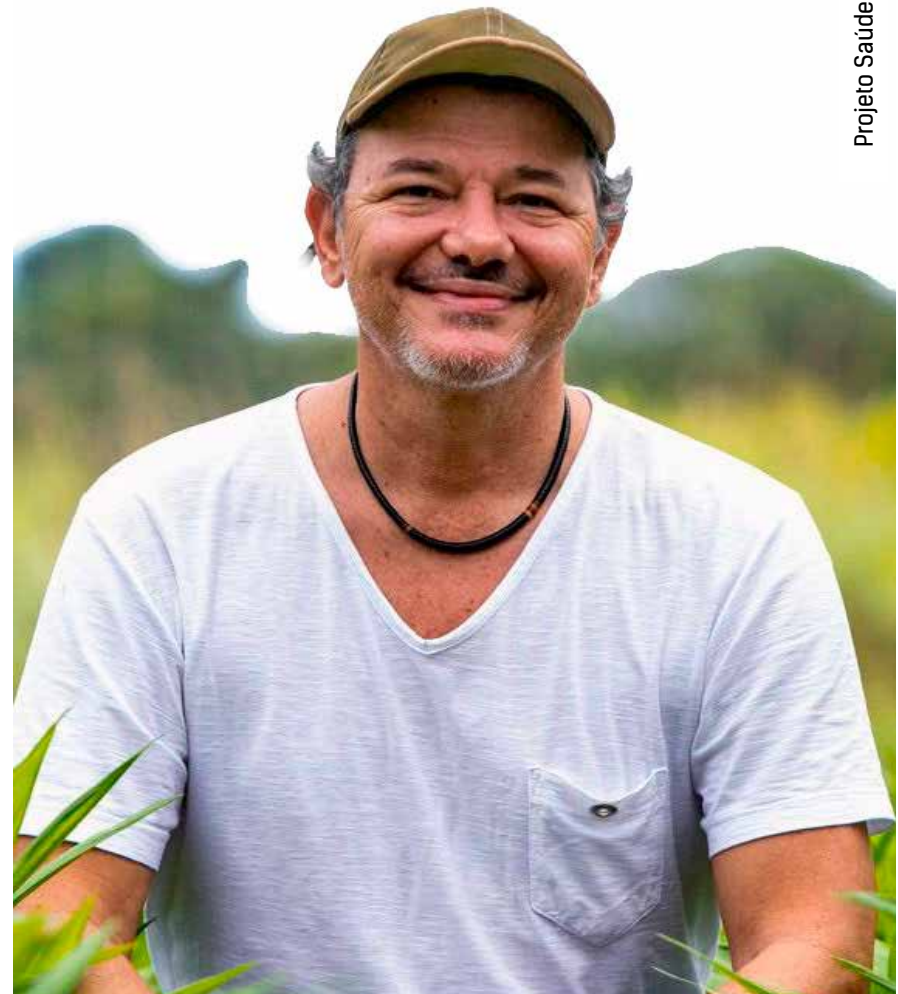


Leonide Príncipe



CAETANO SCANNAVINO

It is an honor and a responsibility to be invited to say a few words about Chico's legacy on the 35th anniversary of his death. The year of his assassination was also the year our current Magna Carta was promulgated, with advances in the rights of Indigenous and Traditional Populations, many of them the result of the struggle of movements like the one led by Chico Mendes from the forests of Acre. [I have] Nothing but gratitude! 1988 was also the year I moved to the Amazon, leaving São Paulo, thinking I was going to stay in the forest for a six-month sabbatical. And here I am, in Tapajós, 35 years later. What made me stay was not the beauty of Alter do Chão, but the people. The People of the Forest, like Chico, showed me that I knew nothing about life. Since then, I've learned more from them than the other way around. [I have] Nothing but gratitude! These lessons have made it clear that the future is Amazonian and that my hometown, São Paulo, needs the Amazon more than the other way around. Chico always made us aware of this. When it came to agrarian reform, he was even more avant-garde and proposed a Green Agrarian Reform, through Extractivist Reserves. Sociobioeconomics, a beautiful word that is often sold as something new, was Chico's banner since the early days of the Movement, in defense of sustainable extractivism, the economy of the standing forest based on the knowledge of nature. Paying attention to the fact that, without the social, there is no environment was another of Chico's challenges that is still present in the struggle for the well-being of the Peoples of the Forest, with full rights to health, education, energy, housing, sanitation and joy. Leaders like Chico Mendes are still as relevant as ever. Chico is one of those figures who makes us wake up the next day wanting to continue the battle for the future. He lives on in the hearts and minds of us Brazilians, as one of the icons of the movement to nationalize the Amazon and Amazonize the world, as a fellow member of this struggle used to say. Nothing but gratitude, Chico!



Projeto Saúde e Alegria

*"If the future is Amazonian,
Chico Mendes is the future."*



CARLOS MILLER

I joined this circle in 1991, when I arrived at the Vitória Amazônica Foundation, which operates throughout the Rio Negro basin, where there are many indigenous communities and which is probably the basin with the most Conservation Units (UCs) in the country. Our challenge was to find out what to do with the Conservation Units that had people in them. One day we were invited to Brasília; the Brazilian government wanted to talk to Amazonian leaders about PPG7. At first there was a lot of confusion and resistance to a project that came from the richest countries in the world to help Brazil preserve its forests. Some of us were against it and others didn't know what it was. Once, at a meeting with the Minister for the Environment, there was Júlio Barbosa, from Acre, defending one position, and Pedro Ramos, from Amapá, with another position, both representing the CNS. They talked it over and decided that the CNS would support PPG7. Our defense was: there's going to be a mountain of money donated to the Brazilian government administered by the World Bank and we're going to be left out of it? We decided to support the PPG7 as long as it wasn't just a government program. Our condition for taking part was the participation of civil society in all instances of the program. Suddenly, just before Eco-92, the government changed. [President] Collor dismissed Lutz [José Lutzenberger] and appointed [José] Goldemberg as Minister. So, we had to set up the GTA, which was born in the transition between the openness Lutz provided for civil society and the closure attempted by Goldemberg. We formalized the foundation of the GTA and saw a very important political articulation from Júlio. We went to talk to Goldemberg about our position of having representatives of the Movement in all the deliberative bodies of the PPG7. Goldemberg replied: "No, there won't be; the only legitimacy in this country is the government, which was elected by Brazilian society. The answer is no; this is a program of the Brazilian government with the G7 governments." He finished the meeting with us and went upstairs to negotiate the project with the World Bank. We went up the stairs and knocked on doors until we found the meeting. We knocked on the door, someone opened it, and then we said:

"We're here representing the GTA and we came in uninvited to tell you that we're withdrawing from the program and we're going to inform our allied organizations in your countries that this Brazilian government is a dictatorship that doesn't think it's important for Brazilian society to participate in a project that will affect their lives. So we're going to, here and there in your countries, detonate this program. It won't get off the ground." We left and half an hour later Goldemberg's advisors were looking for us to talk. We gained from this process. We set standards. PPG7 was the starting point for learning about civil society's relations with the government in the discussion and implementation of public policies of interest to the Peoples of the Forest.



Carlos Miller

"Since Chico Mendes, civil society has grown a lot: it has learned to negotiate, to take a stand, to work in partnership, to understand its role. It was a beautiful process and a lot of learning."



EDEGARD DE DEUS

It was always my dream to live and work in the Amazon. I arrived in Acre in 1978 to work as a professor at UFAC. Things were already quite complicated here, with the advance of deforestation and the arrival of the “paulistas” – as they were called, those who came from the central-southern states of Brazil to establish a new, very different way of relating to the land in the region, which clashed with the ways of life of the rubber tappers and the indigenous people. As a biologist from São Paulo, I sometimes felt embarrassed, but people who arrived at the university had the respect of the movements. Many professors became allies of Chico Mendes in the fight to defend the forest. As soon as I arrived, I took part in several meetings. Some of them at Capitão Ciriaco – a private property in the center of Rio Branco, with lots of rubber trees, which we transformed into an urban park in the 1990s. At that time, I met Chico Mendes. He came to Rio Branco a lot, looking for support for the union organization that was being established in Acre and for the fight to defend the forest, especially after Wilson Pinheiro’s death in 1980. He was also marked for death and spent part of his time in Rio Branco, staying with friends. I remember Chico spending a lot of time at the house, always with Célia Pedrina or Lhé, especially in 1982, when he ran for state representative, in the first elections in which the PT took part. Sometimes we would stay up until late at night filling in those santinhos [piece of paper with voting information] with the candidate’s name and number, because at the time there was nothing electronic, to distribute them and also work on election day for the “boca de urna” (canvassing), which was allowed. From the moment I arrived in Rio Branco, I took part in the Movement in Defense of the Environment along with several other comrades, such as Dote, the Scarcello brothers, Miguel and José Antonio, Bárbara Guimarães, Concita Maia, the Montezumas, Marcos and Marcondes. This movement progressed and, based on it, SOS Amazônia was founded in September 1988, three months before Chico was murdered. Then, invited by him, we visited the

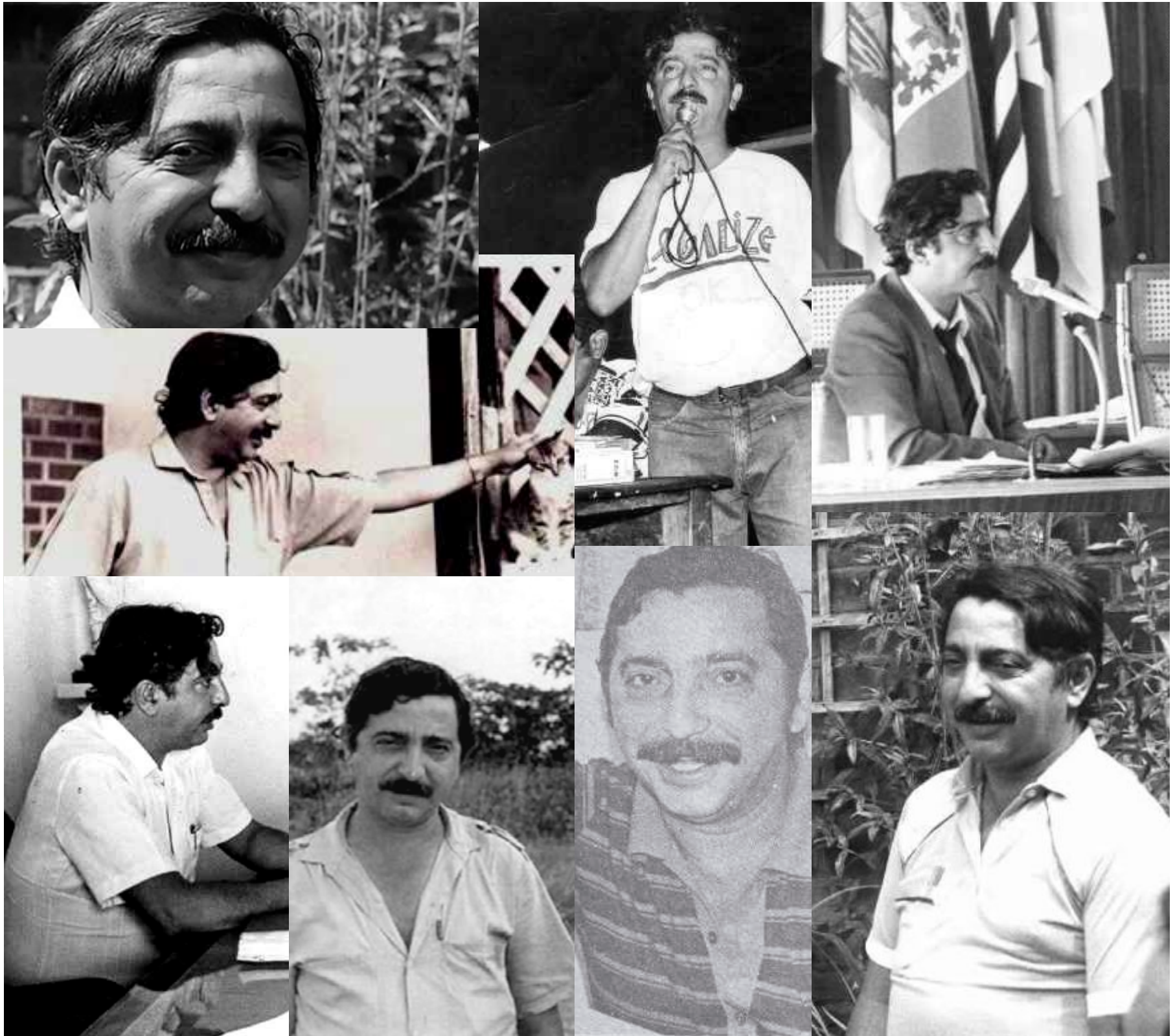
Cachoeira rubber plantation, where Chico lived, and which a few days earlier had been decreed an Extractivist Settlement Project (PAE). Chico was carrying a trophy for the winning team in the soccer match they were organizing to celebrate the PAE’s conquest. That visit to Cachoeira made me realize that Chico and I had ideals in common: to preserve the forest and seek a way of making proper use of its natural resources, improving the working conditions and income of the local population.



Biblioteca da Floresta

“Chico visited the university a lot in search of support. With the struggle in defense of the forest advancing due to the standoffs, and then with the creation of the Extractivist Reserves and the Extractivist Settlement Projects, Chico sought technical support so that, after achieving the land, he could define what to do with it.”





KARLA MARTINS



Midia Ninja

I am Karla Martins, an artist, cultural producer, environmentalist, and activist for social causes and forest peoples. I am the granddaughter of rubber tappers. I left Acre at a young age to study. When I hear the name Chico Mendes, I remember a man sitting on the floor in an old Workers' Party headquarters in Acre, painting banners for a political campaign. I remember seeing that same man twice more, from a distance. The phrase about him was always the same: "He is Chico Mendes, fighting with the rubber tappers for land!" Then I remember a Christmas when I heard the news of his murder. It seemed distant, unrelated to me. Years later, when I returned to Acre, my professional life brought me back to the forest and to that man who painted the banners. By then, he had become history, memory, nostalgia, and an example. Over the years, I gradually came to see Chico Mendes' legacy as a reference point. I learned from the rubber tappers of the Acre Valley, from environmentalists and trade unionists in Brazil and around the world, the importance of collective struggle—which is also the struggle of artists and culture makers. Chico's fight was always a living struggle, which gave birth, from his dreams, those of his extractivist friends, and his indigenous partners, to

Chico's fight was always a living struggle, which gave birth, from his dreams, those of his extractivist friends, and his indigenous partners, to the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.



the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. I saw, in the beautiful trajectory of the movement led by Chico Mendes, schools sprout from the forest floor with the Rubber Tapper Project and become public schools; cooperatives organized by the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union became economic powerhouses based on the sustainable use of the forest; Chico's friends and those inspired by him were elected to political office—Júlio Barbosa de Aquino as mayor of Xapuri for two terms; Jorge Viana to the Governor's Office and the Senate; Binho Marques to the Governor's Office; and, to our pride and reverence, Marina Silva, who, in addition to being a senator, was twice chosen by President Lula to be Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Today, I see the Chico Mendes Committee, created on the night of Chico's assassination, thriving under the presidency of Angela Mendes, his eldest daughter. And I also see, with joy, Angélica, Chico Mendes' eldest granddaughter, laying the foundations for the future by organizing the Youth of the Future Festival every year, together with the youth movement, to bring to Brazilian and global youth the message left by Chico Mendes in his letter-testament of September 6, 1988: "Attention, young people of the future—September 6, 2120, the anniversary or first centenary of the world socialist revolution, which unified all the peoples of the planet in a single ideal and a single thought of socialist unity, and which put an end to all the enemies of the new society. Here remain only the memories of a sad past of pain, suffering, and death. I apologize. I was dreaming when I wrote about these events that I myself will not see. But I am glad to have dreamed." Today, it is no longer just a letter; it is an inspiration for the beautiful movement of the Youth of the Future. It is a living and complete hope. It is the rich legacy of Chico Mendes, which keeps us dreaming and fighting. Long live Chico Mendes, forever!



Embrapa



MARY ALLEGRETTI

One of the qualities I most admired in Chico Mendes was his ability to involve all the people who approached him in his projects, making them feel part of the process and awakening in them a strong sense of inclusion. This didn't just happen because of Chico's affable personality. He truly believed that the changes the rubber tappers wanted would not come about by their doing alone. That's why he gave his partners a central role in their struggle. This equality through difference radically changed my life. I was a professor of anthropology at the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) when I went to Acre for the first time, in 1978, to do my master's thesis for the University of Brasília (UnB). I had never thought of going to the Amazon until I met Terri Vale de Aquino at UnB. He spoke a language that made no sense to me: rubber plantations, rubber gum, rubber roads, income, allotment. Surprised to realize that I didn't know anything outside the reality of southern Brazil, I decided to do my thesis in Acre. I chose a traditional rubber plantation, Alagoas, on the Tarauacá River. This study transformed me and bore much fruit. Alagoas was a baron's rubber plantation, where the rubber tappers paid rent, the shed had counts that were manipulated so that the tappers were always in debt. The rubber tappers were rebellious, they had already gone on strike, the Alagoas Revolution, as it was known in the region. But what struck me most was the mechanism of subordination, fed by illiteracy: the rubber tappers knew they didn't have debts, but they couldn't prove it because they were illiterate. They also felt like "abandoned heroes". They believed that rubber still had a lot of value for Brazil and that they, the producers, lived forgotten in the forests, without support from the government. When I left

"Chico believed that the changes the rubber tappers wanted would not come about by their doing alone. That's why he gave his partners a central role in their struggle. This equality through difference radically changed my life."

Alagoas, I was marked by these feelings of revolt and injustice and I promised myself that I would set up a school for rubber tappers. I tried to return to my life as a teacher, but I couldn't get out of my head those people I had met on the rubber plantations who, unlike my indifferent pupils, dreamed of being able to read and write in order to win their freedom. In 1981, back in Rio Branco, journalist Elson Martins told me that I needed to interview a union leader, Chico Mendes, if I wanted to understand Acre. I did this interview in May and traveled with him to accompany a union assembly that was going to take place in Xapuri. In the Acre Valley, the rubber tappers lived without bosses, they didn't pay rent, they were organized and fought to defend the forest by fighting against deforestation. It was the opposite of what I had seen in Alagoas. I was impressed by the radical transformation of the "freed" rubber tappers, who called the others "captives". Chico was very concerned about strengthening the rubber tappers' organization, especially after the murder of Wilson Pinheiro a year earlier had demobilized the union in Brasiléia. He wanted to do a project that would enhance the union's presence in the forest and thus contribute to the rubber tappers' autonomy. I suggested a school. He was thrilled. I didn't even know, at that moment, how important a role education had played in his life. I was just trying to make Alagoas' promise come true. On the journey back to Rio Branco, I remember it as if it were today, on that crowded, crumbling bus, which I had taken for years to get to Xapuri, on that bumpy road, full of mud in winter and dust in summer, I decided to do, with Chico Mendes, an education project for the forest. That's how the Seringueiro Project was born, which began with a school and a cooperative located on the



Nazaré rubber plantation, at the center of the battles against deforestation in Xapuri. We also created the CTA (Amazon Workers' Center) to provide financial and technical support for the project. The fact that I had known a rubber plantation and the rubber tappers' peculiar way of seeing the world before meeting him gave me a deep understanding of Chico's life story. I knew where he came from and understood his aspiration for justice. When I decided to change my life to do an education project, we became accomplices in a dream to which we dedicated ourselves fully from then on. That's how we organized the National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in 1985, which started an Amazonian movement for extractivist reserves. Times were very difficult. We had no money, the risks and threats to Chico and the other leaders were constant. I was slandered in the newspapers, we needed lawyers, all our energy went into convincing politicians, governments, bureaucrats, scientists and environmentalists of ideas that seem so obvious today, but which at the time were seen as a threat to national security. Chico's murder gave us the feeling that all that effort had been in vain. However, when the international repercussions shocked the country, I could see that every person who had visited him in Xapuri in those years had left committed to him and his dreams for the future. And it was this network that Chico created in his lifetime, and the ideas we built together, that still mobilizes us today.

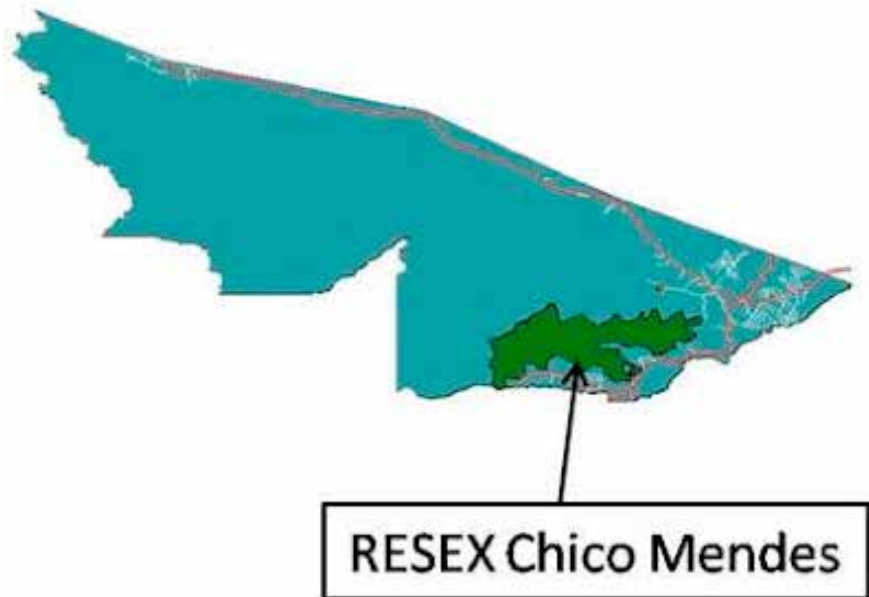






GILBERTO SIQUEIRA

I'm from the interior of São Paulo. I graduated from the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) and came to Acre out of sheer curiosity. I had traveled all over the Amazon to get to know the region a little, and Acre was left out of the itinerary because it was far away, difficult to get to, there was no road, there was nothing. When I got back from the trip, a group of friends from the University had taken part in the Rondon Project, and on their return they stayed at my hostel in Campo Grande. One of them told me a lot about Acre and gave me a book by Mário Maia about the rubber tappers. I was impressed and decided to get to know Acre up close. I arrived here in 1981. It was a mess. The governor at the time was appointed by the military, a very complicated situation. However, I realized that Acre had people with fantastic potential, incredible purity, but who lived under the domination of the local bourgeoisie. Working as an engineer, I soon got into fights with everyone, stopped work and avoided disbursements that "smelled" of corruption. Eventually, I was "expelled". I was only able to return during the process of re-democratization, with the direct elections for Governor in 1984. I soon realized that messing with wood was messing with the forest and messing with the forest was messing with people. That's where my alliance with the Peoples of the Forest began, because I was fighting for the Amazon to have proper engineering, [a kind of technology center] which for me was fundamental to advance the process of developing the region using its natural resources managed by rubber tappers, but which were being threatened by the occupation front, with land grabbing and deforestation for cattle ranching. And this technology center evolved. It actually functioned as an NGO, something in our heads. It was totally independent, funded by a grant from CNPq. Don't ask me how and I don't know, but we managed, with the help of friends, to attach this NGO to the state structure. FUNTAC has evolved. We were pioneers, the first state to work with remote sensing in the Amazon and then with this whole process of sustainable development that we see today. It was at FUNTAC that, for the



"We showed Chico a satellite image of the rubber plantation with the allotments, and Chico began to identify the place of each rubber tapper. We explained that it was a big photograph taken from the sky, which was available to them."



first time, information on land use, deforestation and state revenue was cross-referenced. We realized that deforestation was autophagy for Acre. In a historical series, the more deforestation, the poorer Acre became, the weaker the local economy, which was based on the forest. It was at this time that the CNS, led by Chico Mendes, asked Macedo, an advisor to the CNS, to carry out a survey of what was happening in the Juruá Valley. This report, written with a lot of feeling and passion, showed the harsh reality of slave labor in the Juruá. Talking to an important and very sensitive person from the BNDES who came here to help us with the zoning, Adir Jeanine da Costa, a very intelligent economist, saw our anguish and said: "Look, we have Finsocial at the BNDES. Who knows, if we make a letter of inquiry to the Bank's staff, we might be able to get some funds for the rubber tappers?" We talked to the CNS people and they agreed. So FUNTAC came forward and was involved in the process and the signing of the CNS contract with the BNDES. The contract earmarked a good deal of money to strengthen the creation of the Juruá Extractivist Reserve and also for Xapuri. This project included everything from the purchase of a truck, food and a warehouse for stock. It was a joy. It was the first Brazilian money to support the rubber tappers at that time. Chico Mendes sent a small part of the funds to Xapuri, where the union was already structured, and most of it went to Juruá. The CNS was trying to break with slave labor in that region. Imagine the confusion this caused within the government, which didn't have ideological control of FUNTAC. I remember it was just before Christmas, on the 20th or 21st. Chico received a truck from the project. I think it was the first one from the Xapuri Cooperative. Jorge gave him the key to the truck and he took it to Xapuri. It was in this truck that he toured the city on the day he died.



MURIEL SARAGOUSSI

I arrived in the Amazon in October 1985 on a post-doctoral fellowship at INPA, after having studied plant breeding in Rennes, France. In 1987, a mutual friend introduced me to anthropologist Mary Allegretti and Jayme Araújo, president of CNS, who spoke about the need for research support. I then forwarded the Social Movement's first agreement with INPA researchers. In 1989, there was a ceremony to launch the Sarney government's Our Nature program. They had hired researchers and used parts of their work without an institutional agreement. The INPA Researchers' Association (ASPI) prepared a protest together with social movements such as FASE, CIMI and many others. I was chosen to read the protest. After that I had cars following me. Colleagues advised me to go to Acre for the II National Meeting of Rubber Tappers and the first of the Peoples of the Forest, where I met Júlia Feitoza and Rosa Roldán. Journalists were filming everyone, in an atmosphere of "who would be the next target after the death of Chico Mendes". It was strange. A girl from União do Vegetal [Ayahuasca-based organization], with a low voice, asked on the microphone why there were police there, and the boy she had denounced tried to hide. Bishop Moacyr Grechi had to direct him to leave. Chico's murderers had not yet been tried, the indigenous people were clamoring for their lands to be guaranteed under the terms of the recent Constitution and the first women's debates were taking place. There was a lot of tension. The meeting marked a unique movement, because everyone who was there is still fighting today, something that is hard to come by. That year also saw the Altamira meeting against the Belo Monte dams. An Amazonian dialogue of the Peoples of the Forest began, with all the possible difficulties. At this time, the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements was also emerging, which would take part in the preparations for ECO-92. This vision of putting social issues together with environmental ones was a great Brazilian and Amazonian contribution to Eco-92. It was the first time that a UN preparatory meeting included the premise of combating poverty as part of the sustainable model. You can't

talk about the Amazon in this period without mentioning the GTA. The Pilot Program PDA, which was the first resource aimed at communities, was an achievement of the Movement that generated hundreds of positive experiences. Instead of isolated projects, many managed to generate production or cooperation chains in the regions, and this project relied heavily on the GTA.

"The legacy of collective action, learned from Chico Mendes, needs to advance towards sustainable development in the Amazon, with the broad participation of the Peoples of the Forest."



VIRGÍLIO VIANA

Chico Mendes lit a flame of utopia in me that has been burning since December 1988, at the last lecture he gave before his death in Piracicaba, when I learned about his vision and dreams. Fresh from Harvard with my Ph.D., when I heard about Chico Mendes, I immediately wanted to become an accomplice in that utopia of defending the forest and improving people's lives. Then came the news of his death with such commotion in the social movements, the environmental movement, academia and progressive political leaders. In the wake of the demonstrations, the Chestnut Project was born, with the aim of making the Chico Mendes de Xapuri Agro-Extractivist Cooperative (CAEX) work. In 1999, Jorge Viana was elected governor and set up the "Forest Government", but with a lot of resistance to forest management in extractivist areas. Ronald Polanco asked me to reconstruct the forest management proposal for the Chico Mendes Agro-Extractivist Settlement Project (PAECM), which had been formulated by the Amazon Workers' Center (CTA). There was a lot of opposition to the idea of producing wood in Cachoeira, but with a lot of hard work and commitment, we managed to get the leaders of Cachoeira on board. It was the first community-based forest management project certified by the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) in Brazil: a victory. In 2000, I proposed a "second standoff", or economic standoff, to confront the economic logic that led the rubber tappers themselves to plant pastures inside the rubber plantations. We did the math and proved that the forest was worth more standing than deforested. We therefore needed to carry out forest management as a way of keeping Chico's utopia alive: saving the forest. In 2004, at the Amazonas Environment Week, we defended and helped spread the idea that "the forest is worth more standing than cut down". In short, there have been many achievements driven by the same utopia: saving the forest and improving the lives of the people who live there and defend it. I'll end this testimony with a special thanks to Chico Mendes. That 1988 message in Piracicaba was a strong ingredient in everything I've done. I hope that the record of these "doings" will serve as motivation for many others to keep the flame of the same utopia burning.



"I owe a sincere and honest tribute to Chico, whose death ignited not only protests in every corner of the planet. More than that: he awakened in many people, like me, the feeling that we were facing an urgent and necessary utopia: saving the forest and improving the lives of the people who live there and defend it."



→ Atenção Jovens do Futuro

6 de Setembro do ano
de 2120, aniversário do
1º Centenário da Revolução
Socialista Mundial, que
unificou todas o povos do
planeta. Nem só ideais e
nem só pensamento de
unidade Socialista, e que
foi fim a todos os inimigos
da nova sociedade.

Aqui ficam saudando
a lembrança de um triste
passado de dor, sofrimento e
morte.

Desculpem

eu estava saudando
quando escrevi estes
acontecimentos, que eu
mesmo não vivi. Mas tudo
o prazer de ter saudado

L

→

Atenção

LETTER FROM A DREAM

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Futuro

MESSAGE FROM DAVI YANOMAMI TO THE DAUGHTERS AND SON OF CHICO MENDES

It's 35 years since Chico Mendes, our friend, has died. And I leave a message for Chico Mendes' children. I leave the positive thinking that their father had. I wish Chico Mendes' children to be as good as their father. The children should follow their father's path, continue their father's struggle. Take up the same banner. Chico Mendes' children must always remember their father's dream, they must not forget whose children they are. We need to show where we've come from and where we're going. You can't negotiate, weaken or fade the struggle. No amount of money can pay for a piece of forest. Chico Mendes' children are not indigenous, but they are from the forest. The ranchers are the big beetles that cut through the forest. The miners are like a big armadillo that digs holes and destroys. They are like the armadillo canastra, with big nails, digging deep down in search of the earth's riches. We fighters never live or die alone. We trust our leaders. Chico has already lived and, now, he looks after us. We men of the forest are the fruit of the earth, of the force of nature. I am fruit, my father was fruit. I am my father's seed. The seed of my people. Chico's children are seeds that must continue the struggle. (Testimony given to Zezé Weiss, in September 2008, at the Hutukara Association, in Roraima and updated for this edition).

Davi Kopenawa Yanomami





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fóver
do

ANA LUIZA DE LIMA SILVA

I've learned through life that communication transforms! I'm not just talking about traditional communication, but communication that goes beyond that. It unites, mobilizes, engages, generates movement and causes social change. I see Chico Mendes as a great communicator, and it is through this communication, which empowers and shares struggles, that we are here today. Communication brings me closer to the Chico Mendes Committee, which drives new paths, enables new perspectives and potentializes new encounters. It is in the Committee that I have been able to have one of my best life experiences. After all, I understand that the call I receive from my father Oxóssi to work is, above all, about defending our Earth. And I can't do that alone. I proudly do it together with the people of Chico Mendes.

"I see Chico Mendes as a great communicator, and it is through this communication, which empowers and shares struggles, that we are here today."



Arquivo Pessoal



BRUNO PACÍFICO

It was not from books or from classrooms that I learned of Chico Mendes. I heard about him from live voices, from people who walked alongside him and who, still today, spreads his memory and his legacy all around the corners of this world. What touches me the most, what stays with me from each testimony that I hear, is the fact that Chico Mendes never acted alone, he always worked in the collective. After learning so much from Júlia Feitoza, Júlio Barbosa, Leide Aquino, Karla Martins e so many others, I understood that it is only we join hands that victory becomes possible. "Nobody does anything alone", that's the main lesson I learned. Our path is, and will always be the result of how we work together. I am, therefore, a seed born out of this mosaic or wonderful people who fight for social justice in this world. People who were friends with Chico and people who became part of the struggle just from learning about his legacy. I also remember when Elson Martins invited me to transcribe Genésio's book, "Pássaro sem Rumor: Uma Amazônia Chamada Genésio" (Aimless Bird: An Amazon Named Genésio). There I found a road I never imagined for myself, and my mind became directed to communication. As much as Chico Mendes was and, somehow, continues to be a strong forest communication, I understood the power of a leader who knows how to communicate with his own peers and with the outside world. I believe not many people see Chico Mendes with this approach of mine: as an environmentalist, yes, but also as a communicator. Because he was this and more. There is a saying I always keep in my mind: "The word which comes from backwards is the one to guide the frontline". This sentence translates my destiny, because they contain the words of Chico Mendes which defined, and continues to define the kind of human being I decided to become someone who, through communication, will always fight for social justice. Chico Mendes is the headlight who continues enlightening our journey in the fight for peoples and forests.

"What touches me the most, what stays with me from each testimony that I hear, is the fact that Chico Mendes never acted alone, he always worked in the collective."



Arquivo Pessoal

Genésio



Comité Chico Mendes

→ Alenc

CÁTIA SANTOS

"Attention Young People of the Future!" This is a very striking phrase for me, because I feel it's a call from Chico Mendes for us young people to show our commitment to care for our territories, the Amazon and the planet. A strong call for us, too, to be Resistance. Since I was a child, I have always listened carefully to the stories told by my father, my grandfather and the elders of my community about what life was like in our region at the time of the bosses, about the standoffs, about the struggle of the rubber tappers, about the story of Chico Mendes. These stories show me the importance of the trajectory that ensured the creation of the Extractivist Reserves, especially our Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve, one of the first four to be created in Brazil, in March 1990. As a young woman born here in Chico Mendes, in this piece of protected forest in Acre, I am fully aware that we only have the opportunity to live in our traditional way in our extractivist territories, thanks to the tireless struggle of the leaders who came before us, especially Chico Mendes, his companions, our relatives, our ancestors. Today, fortunately, around here we can live off the resources of socio-biodiversity, respecting nature and valuing our culture and identity. The courage and determination that Chico Mendes always showed in the face of challenges and threats continues to be a source of inspiration for me, for my generation and certainly for future generations. And it is because he dedicated his life to protecting the Amazon and defending the rights of the Peoples of the Forest that Chico Mendes has become such a strong symbol of Resistance. Although, like me, many of us did not have the

opportunity to meet him in person, his memory and legacy live on in our hearts and minds. Everything he stood for will never be forgotten. It is our responsibility as young people to honor his memory and continue his struggle, defending and protecting our extractivist territories, his main legacy. His ideals of social justice, the defense of the Peoples of the Forest and the conservation of the Amazon echo in our hearts and strengthen us to continue fighting. And we, the youth of the forest, are ready to take on the mission left to us by Chico Mendes. The struggle is not easy, but it is necessary. We cannot give up in the face of challenges.

"Chico Mendes taught us that it is possible to resist and promote change through unity and awareness. His example motivates us to be agents of transformation, to fight for our rights and to defend our territory."



DARLON NERES DOS SANTOS

Chico Mendes was one of the first forest leaders to draw attention to the importance of conserving the Amazon and to the negative impacts of deforestation and agricultural activities in the region. He attracted many young people to get involved in the fight to protect the environment, preserve the forests and reduce climate change. Chico Mendes also protected the rights of local communities and peoples living in the Amazon. His activism highlighted the importance of protecting the human rights and dignity of the people who depend on the forests for their very survival. Chico's legacy shows how local people can play a crucial role in promoting sustainable development. He advocated community management of forests and the importance of empowering communities so that they have a voice in decisions that affect their livelihoods. Chico Mendes' struggle received support and solidarity from people and organizations all over the world. This demonstrates how environmental and human rights issues can transcend borders and inspire global action. Chico Mendes is an example of courage. He faced threats and dangers in his fight to preserve the Amazon. His courage and determination serve as an example to young people, showing the possibility of facing challenges in defense of just causes. The memory of Chico Mendes' legacy for young people is a call to action and environmental responsibility. He inspires young people to get involved in protecting the environment, defending human rights and seeking a more just and sustainable world. Chico Mendes' example continues to influence and motivate younger generations to make a difference in their communities and in the world as a whole, to ensure the protection of forests. We Amazonian youth are the Chico Mendes of today. We are interconnected in various states of this country with a common agenda: to make Chico Mendes' dream come true.

"I think, Chico, that wherever you are, your heart is certainly happy, because on this Amazonian soil there is rebellion, there is youth."



DIONE TORQUATO

I was born in the Tefé National Forest in the state of Amazonas. I am the son and grandson of rubber tappers. From an early age I heard about Chico Mendes and his fight against the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. Stories of his courage and resistance in defending our territories always echoed in my ears. I had a dream of visiting his city and his house, until in 2016 I had the happiness and honor of living that dream: I visited Chico Mendes' house in Xapuri, in the company of his daughter Angela, whom I met in Belém do Pará in 2013. Chico, thank you for fighting for us. Thank you for telling the world about the importance of protecting the Amazon. Thank you for giving a voice to our peoples and territories. I would love to have had the chance to meet you, Chico, to tell you in person that your struggle was not in vain. Today, at the age of 36 and with two teenage daughters, I am increasingly certain that by dedicating my life to honoring your story and fighting for the continuity of your legacy, which continues to inspire many people, especially those of us who are still young, I did what had to be done. You are present in every seed planted, in every tree protected and in every activity promoting our culture of conservation and respect for nature. You taught us to love and respect the Amazon, to fight for our land and our dignity. After all these years and in the face of so many challenges, it is now up to us to continue your fight, because we understand that there will never be social equality as long as there is oppression of our peoples. We know that there will be no justice and inclusion as long as our territories are under the power of big business. That our dreams cannot be realized as long as our freedom is limited by the absence of the state with its public policies. This understanding we have of the world today is because, back then, you, Chico, taught us that other worlds are possible when we fight for freedom, equality and socio-environmental justice. Your example of courage and love for life will never be forgotten. Long live Chico Mendes!



"You, Chico, taught us that other worlds are possible when we fight for freedom, equality and socio-environmental justice."

CNS



LETÍCIA MORAES



Marcos Jorge Dias

My name is Letícia Santiago de Moraes, I am an extractivist living in the Agro-Extractivist Settlement Project (PAE), São João I Island, Nossa Senhora da Boa Esperança Community, Pagão River, Curralinho municipality, Marajó Island, Pará. I am the daughter of Dulcimar Baratinha de Moraes and Miracelia Santiago de Moraes, important leaders of the extractivist populations of the Nossa Senhora da Boa Esperança community. I was born and raised in this community of mine; here I am and belong to the territory, the rivers, the forests and the diversity. In this process, I am a little seed that, together with many other little seeds, is fighting for the collective, for social, environmental and climate justice. The territory I live in represents for me the hope of living in the forest, a heritage kept by my ancestors, which I take as the basis of my re-existence. My journey as an extractivist woman is connected to the stories of the great leaders and martyrs of the Amazon, such as Chico Mendes. A revolutionary whose ideal lives on in all generations and tells stories like mine, because the youth of the forest are also extractivists! We were born with the responsibility of keeping a legacy of struggle, mourning, resistance, conquest and hope, and the territory is the root of this legacy. That's why we reaffirm the continuity of this Peoples of the Forest struggle, even as we face our daily challenges, since we were born in an environment where staying in our homes with our ways of life is challenging due to the lack of guaranteed rights. The letter to the "Youth of the Future", left by Chico Mendes, motivates me to continue defending the construction of a fairer world, so that one day the legacy "of pain, suffering and death will only be a memory," as the great leader Chico Mendes dreamed.

"It is from the stories told and read that I carry on the legacy of Chico Mendes, and I continue to perpetuate Chico's saying that 'the defense of the forest is for humanity'."

→ A Terra



Comité Chico Mendes

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RAIARA MENDES

Chico Mendes, our environmental hero, dedicated his life to defending the Amazon and the rights of the traditional peoples who live there. Born into a family of rubber tappers, Chico witnessed the challenges faced by our communities due to the uncontrolled exploitation of the forest. The impact of Chico Mendes' story on younger generations is profound. His tireless struggle and personal sacrifice serve as an inspiring example of how individuals can make a difference in protecting the environment and defending human rights. We young people are particularly influenced by his story, as we recognize the urgency of environmental issues in our time. Chico Mendes' teachings highlight the importance of unity and community organizing in the quest for meaningful change. His leadership demonstrates how ordinary people can come together to face powerful challenges. By learning about his story, we young people are encouraged to get involved in environmental causes and unite in collective efforts to protect nature and promote social justice. Chico Mendes reminds us of the interconnection between environmental preservation and the well-being of local communities. His struggle highlights that environmental degradation disproportionately affects the most vulnerable and that it is essential to find solutions that protect both the environment and people's livelihoods. By learning from Chico Mendes' story, we young people are motivated to seek a sustainable balance between human needs and the conservation of nature. For us, the life of Chico Mendes is a source of continuous inspiration, as it demonstrates that passion, courage and dedication can create a lasting impact on the protection of the environment and the fight for human rights.

"The story of Chico Mendes reminds us that young people play a vital role in building a greener and fairer future, shaping the way we face the environmental challenges of our time."



TXAI SURUÍ

My name is Txai Surui, I'm only 24, but my people have lived in the Amazon rainforest for at least 6,000 years. My father, the great chief Almir Suruí, taught me that we should listen to the stars, the moon, the wind, the animals and the trees. Today the weather is getting warmer, the animals are disappearing, the rivers are dying, our crops aren't flourishing like they used to. The Earth is speaking. She's telling us that we don't have any more time. A companion said: "Are we going to keep thinking that today's wounds will be solved with ointments and painkillers, even though we know that tomorrow the wound will be bigger and deeper"? We need to take a different path, with courageous and global changes. It's not 2030 or 2050, it's now! While you are closing your eyes to reality, the guardian of the forest Ari Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, my childhood friend, was murdered for protecting nature. Indigenous Peoples are on the front line of the climate emergency, so we must be at the center of the decisions that take place here. We have ideas to postpone the end of the world. Let's stop the emission of lying and irresponsible promises; let's stop the pollution of empty words and let's fight for a livable future and present. We must always believe that dreams are possible. May our utopia be a future on Earth! (Speech by Txai Suruí at the opening of COP 26, held in Glasgow, Scotland, from October 31 to November 12, 2021).

"May our utopia be a future on Earth!"



ONU

gão Joven 2020

WENDEL ARAÚJO

I'm Wendel Araújo, the son and grandson of rubber tappers and a resident of the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve in Assis Brasil, the last municipality in the Alto Acre region. My grandfather, Eloy Batista de Araújo, was one of the militants who fought alongside Chico Mendes during the time of the standoffs. I grew up in the middle of this struggle. I really respect our ancestry and, since then, I've only had good references. Today I am my cousin De Araújo's successor at Amopreab. I'm also director and youth secretary of the Assis Brasil Rural Workers' Union, part of the deliberative council of the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve and youth secretary of the CNS, 2024-2027. I'm also one of the founders of the Varadouro Collective, a forest youth movement that emerged during Chico Mendes Week 2022. The Varadouro Collective was created by us young people from the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve, based on our need to occupy spaces not only in the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve, but also in Juruá, Jordão and other Conservation Units (CUs). The name, Coletivo Varadouro, pays homage to the "Varadouro", that "Jungle Newspaper" which was so important to the resistance of the rubber tappers' movement in Acre. Varadouro, too, in the sense of the varadouros [rubber roads] that exist within the forest, which are the branches, terrestrial paths that we have and that connect our extractivist populations. The Collective has only grown. Today, we have young people from Assis Brasil to Alto Juruá, on the other side of Acre. And young people from other PAs [Protected Areas] also want to take part. We're preparing a face-to-face activity, so that we can organize ourselves better, draw up our work plan, set up our board of directors and then make room for young people from other PAs. We need to do a lot of work, especially on the subject of education, because we live in a very sad situation: right here in the Chico Mendes Resex, we have 12-year-olds who have never been in a classroom. As well as education and health, we need to fight for quality communication, with broad access to the Internet, because this is what keeps young people in our territories. With good communication in the interior, young

leaders don't have to leave the forest to study, they can go to university virtually, for example. This is why we are growing so much. We already have a seat on the Deliberative Council of Resex Chico Mendes and on the Executive Board of CNS. Fortunately, today we have a voice and a say so that, with commitment, we can seek not only to preserve the memory of Chico Mendes and all those who fought with him, but also to guarantee a dignified life for our forest youth who, in order to continue living within the territories, need investment in health, education, communication and, just as importantly, in science and technology, because only then will we be able to maintain our cultures and modernize our production within the forest.

"Someone said: 'Man, let's get together these good people we have who debate and fight.' That's how the Varadouro Collective came about, named after Varadouro, which was a resistance newspaper."



Marcos Jorge Dias





Sou Jovem do Futuro

YOUTH OF THE FUTURE FESTIVAL

Every September 6 in Acre, the Chico Mendes Committee holds the Youth of the Future Festival, in memory of Chico Mendes and in defense of a sustainable future for the Amazon. The day was chosen because on this date in 1988, Chico Mendes wrote his letter of testament to the youth of the future. In 1988, three months before he was murdered, environmentalist Chico Mendes left a letter calling on the youth of the future to continue the fight for a fairer and happier world. The letter was addressed to the young people of 2120, who, in Chico Mendes' dreams, would be celebrating 100 years of revolution and resistance in the Amazon. Inspired by the "testament" that Chico left for young people, in 2020 the Chico Mendes Committee began holding the Youth of the Future Festival, which aims to promote and spread the ideas of the great leader that was Chico Mendes. Over the last few years, six editions of the Festival have been held, all of them in a hybrid format [in person and remote], with face-to-face activities in Acre, shared via social media to other audiences, especially young people in Brazil and around the world.

Chico Mendes Committee





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AMAZON ALLIANCE

We are indigenous people, quilombolas, extractivists, people from the urban outskirts, from the North of Brazil. We are guardians of this Sacred Land. We are Amazons! Our aim is clear: to unite, raise awareness and awaken a sense of belonging among the Peoples of the Amazon. We fight for the prosperity of the Peoples of the Forest, strengthening our community ties, our Territories and building an Alliance in defense of life. We confront the unbridled exploitation of the Earth and seek healing for our people and our planet. Our roots were planted centuries ago. We will not allow our Traditions, our Nature and our Sacredness to be taken from us. Our waters have the right to follow their course. We resist on the outskirts of the cities and in the territories. It's about our Houses, our Histories and our Struggles! It's time to honor our Ancestral ties with Union and Action. We are the Alliance of the Amazons. Through our roots, we build a present of hope and a sustainable future. Join us on this journey of Struggle and Resistance! Let's show the world the strength and diversity of the Amazons. We want to include, belong and echo our voices in every corner. It's time to honor our Ancestry with Union and Action.

Amazon Alliance





ção Joven do



LEGACY



We feel a great transformation. The vast majority are now aware that the struggle will have to be different. They are determined to defend their rights, they have understood that, united, they have the strength to hold on to the land, where they can fight against the latifundia. Before, they didn't know what to do about the problem. But over time, the more experienced ones have been making others aware, saying that the land is ours, that it was our ancestors who fought to conquer this land, and that today it is possible to reconquer it again, if necessary.

Chico Mendes





Comité Chico Mendes



CNS

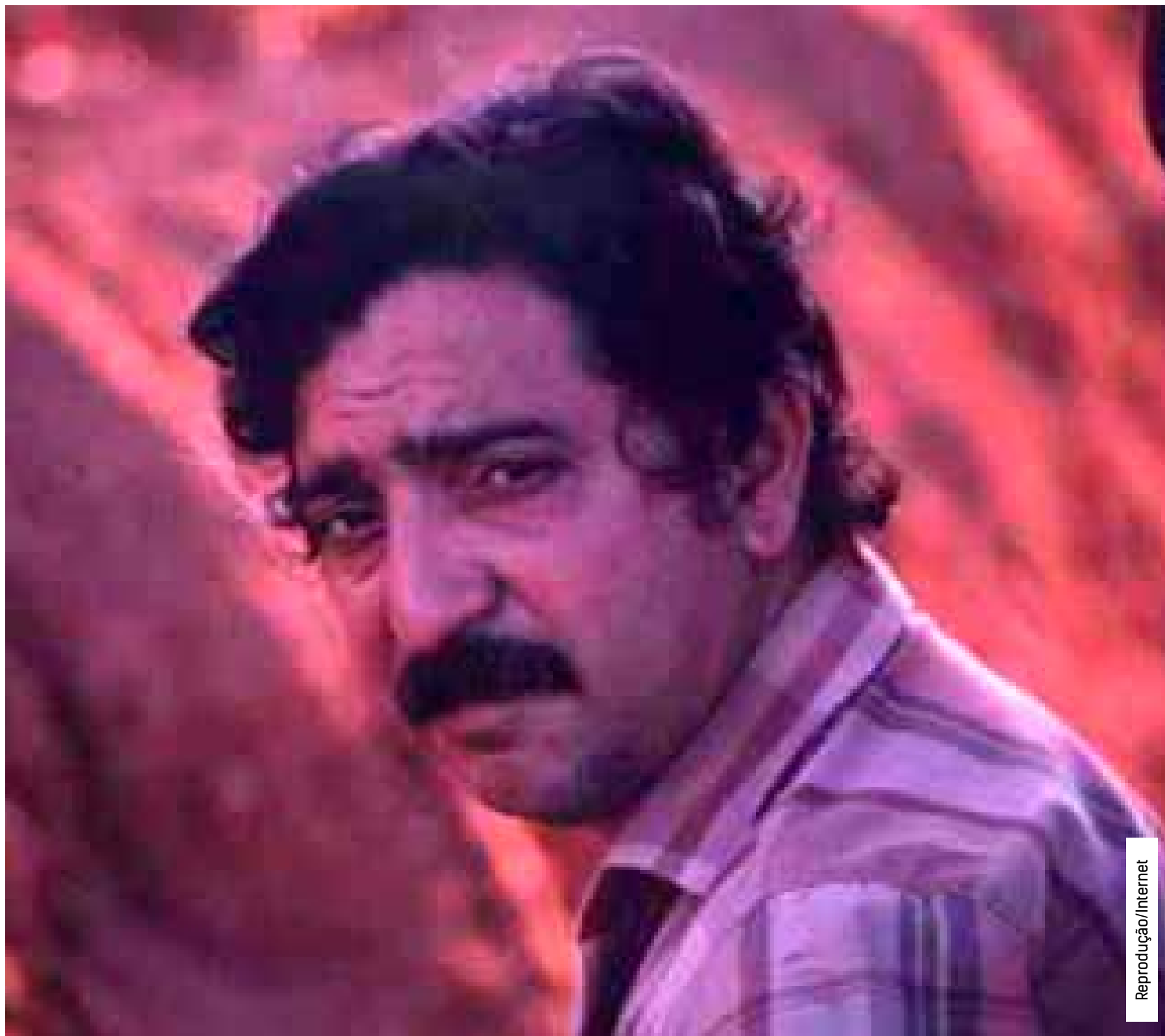




Xapuri, which at that time was still in its infancy, has taken up the Movement with force. It's the Movement with a different experience: leadership. We shouldn't have a single leader, but all the workers should be leaders. Now, as it always happens in the Workers' Movement in Brazil, people start to focus on one name, and that name, either by luck or misfortune, fell on me. It was Chico Mendes who began to lead the Movement. So we started thinking along the following lines: we started setting up schools, we started building new leaders. As the schools sprang up, leaders began to emerge in each of them, because the rubber tappers began to have a vision and to participate more actively in the Movement. This began to reach the outside world. The press began to give greater prominence to the struggle in Xapuri. And then we thought of an idea: "Well, rubber tappers aren't recognized as a class. So we're going to have to find a way to put pressure on the federal authorities, back in Brasilia, where the decisions are made. The rubber tapper has never been to Brasilia. We're going to have to find a way for the rubber tappers to go to Brasilia and tell their story." Mary Allegretti began to work with some organizations and invited me. I went to Brasilia in May 1985 and we began to organize the National Meeting of Rubber Tappers. In October 1985, we scheduled the first National Meeting of Amazonian rubber tappers in the history of the rubber tappers' struggle. This was a historic meeting in the rubber tapper struggle throughout Brazil. [Since then] allies have started to appear; we've started to step up the fight in the standoffs and we've started to win victories. (Interview with Lucélia Santos, in May 1988).

Chico Mendes





Reprodução/Internet



ADEVALDO DIAS

I'm Adevaldo Dias da Costa, president of the Chico Mendes Memorial. The MCM was created on July 12, 1996, by the National Council of Rubber Tappers, now the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS), with the aim of publicizing Chico Mendes' struggle and ideals on a national and international level, as well as supporting Brazil's agro-extractivist communities. On May 4, 1997, the MCM was legally registered as a Civil Society Organization of Public Interest (OSCIP), with its headquarters and registered office in the city of Manaus, state of Amazonas. Since then, the Chico Mendes Memorial has provided technical assistance to the social movement of extractivist populations, especially in preserving the memory and defending the legacy of Chico Mendes, and in promoting the sustainable development of extractivist communities in the Amazon, as well as in other regions of Brazil. The focus of the Memorial's actions is to support the strengthening of the Peoples of the Forest, especially in the implementation of local demonstration projects and in influencing regional and national public policies that impact their lives. I am a citizen of the forest, born on the Mari-Mari rubber plantation, in the municipality of Carauari, where the Médio Juruá Extractivist Reserve is today located, in the state of Amazonas, and I have been running the Chico Mendes Memorial since 2005. At MCM, I coordinated the implementation of the largest water and basic sanitation program for extractivist and riverside populations in the Amazon, the Sanear Project, which provided safe water and sanitation in four Amazonian states, benefiting 23 municipalities, 247 communities and more than 20,000 people. Currently, I coordinate partnerships and projects for initiatives to guarantee and protect land and generate income for extractivist communities, based on the sustainable use of local natural resources, such as the Pirarucu Collective Marketing Arrangement, in partnership with the Carauari Rural Producers Association (ASPROC), which has increased the income of families that manage pirarucu fish by 75%. The memory

and legacy of Chico Mendes, the inspiration behind the struggle for the Chico Mendes Memorial, will continue to be a source of inspiration for us and for all the people who are in our struggles now and also for those who will continue this journey when we are no longer here. Chico Mendes: Forever present!

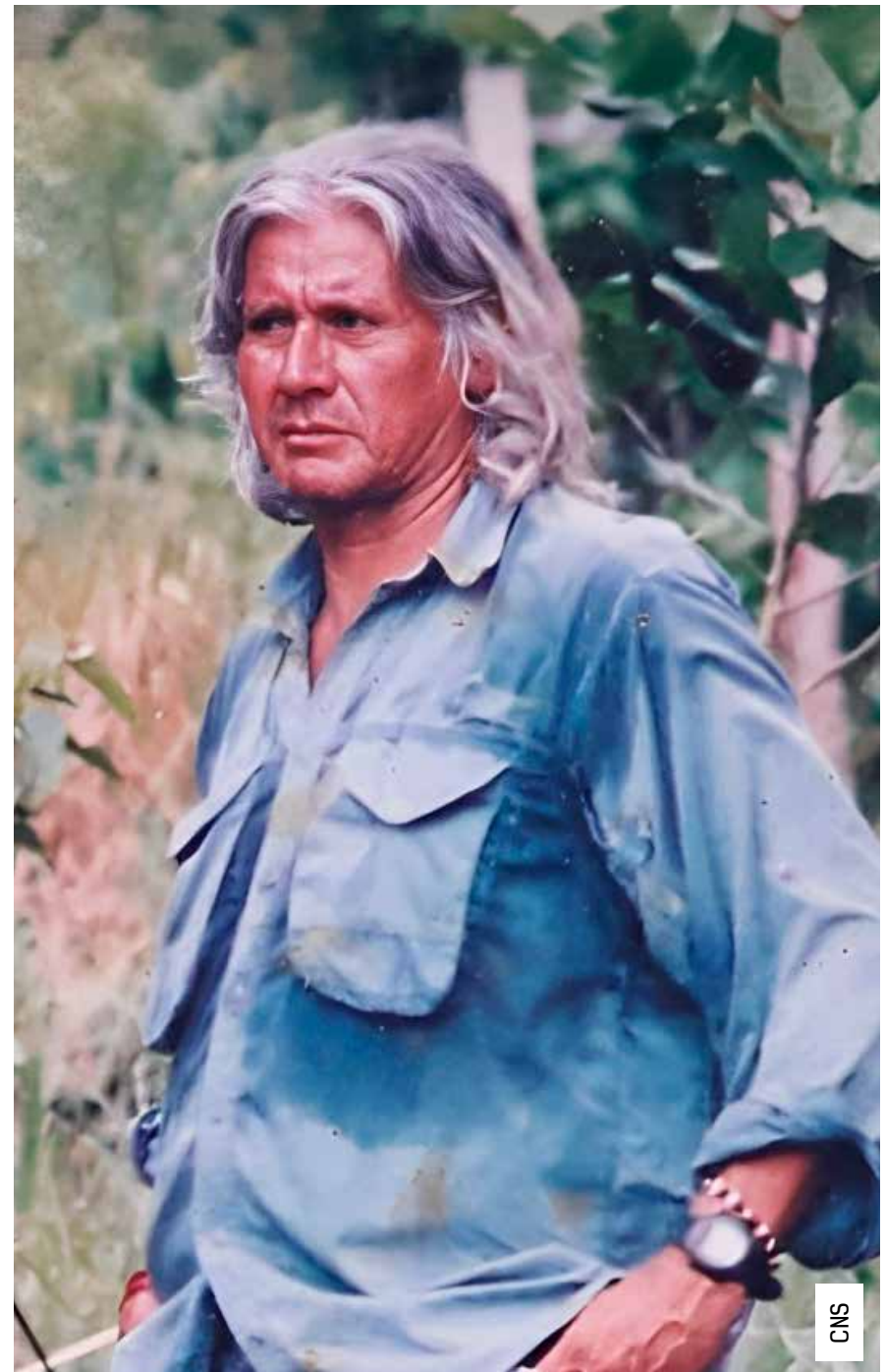
"The work we do at the Chico Mendes Memorial is our way of honoring the memory and defending the legacy of Chico Mendes. We're simply grateful!"



JUAN CARLOS CARRASCO RUEDA

I arrived in Brazil from Chile because of the Pinochet dictatorship in 1975. Along the way, I moved to Curitiba and, in 1987, I was invited to work at the Institute of Amazonian Studies (IEA). In 1987, I was sent to Xapuri, where I was given the unique opportunity to participate in the struggle and life of the rubber tappers. There I met great leaders, such as Chico Mendes, Júlio Barbosa and Juarez Leitão, who later became my friends and comrades. With them and the IEA team, I helped to carry out the first studies and drafts of the Extractivist Reserve projects, especially the Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve. As a technician and activist, I accompanied the creation and work of the National Council of Rubber Tappers, now the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS) and, a few years later, the creation of the Amazon Working Group (GTA). I really miss the ebullience of the debates and the continuous climate of dialogue in which we worked in those days. Today, as a matter of historical commitment to the legacy of Chico Mendes, and also because I believe that movements become stronger when they unfurl great flags together, I continue to take care of the international department of the CNS. I recently traveled to Europe with CNS president Júlio Barbosa de Aquino to reconnect and establish new partnerships. Let's keep fighting!

"From Santiago de Chile, where democracy is fortunately thriving today, I keep thinking about the hard times of Acre's struggle and how far we have come under the leadership of comrade Chico Mendes. My heart is filled with nostalgia."



MANOEL ESTÉBIO

I arrived in Acre from Fortaleza, Ceará, in February 1980. About a month later I met Chico Mendes, who was a councilman and a popular mandate holder. At that time, the unions were in their infancy; they had only been founded for five years. In many cases, they functioned like police stations for union issues. The rubber tappers' movement was very strong and Contag led the resistance against the federal government's offensive which, with the local support of the state government and city halls, aimed to turn Acre into a center for extensive cattle ranching, made possible by granting generous tax incentives to groups from the South, Southeast and Midwest. Around here, they were all referred to as "paulistas" by the locals. In 1981, after finishing my period of religious formation, the novitiate, in Rio Branco, I was transferred to the parish of Xapuri, where I began to help Father Cláudio Avallone. My job was to accompany the Xapuri STR, which was going through an electoral process marked by a very fierce dispute, with well-defined positions: on the one hand, those who defended conciliation with the landowners, representing their interests; on the other, the rubber tappers of the opposition, mostly linked to the CEBs. This group, which included Chico Mendes, Raimundão [Raimundo Mendes], Dercy Teles de Carvalho and others, emerged victorious. Dercy became the president of the union. It was at that time that I fell in love with her, left religious life and joined the union movement for good. After Dercy left the management of the STR, we joined the Seringueiro Project, which supported the STR and maintained education and health actions in the union offices of the Nazaré, Tupã and São Pedro rubber plantations. I then went to live in the "Já com Fome" allotment, in the Nazaré rubber plantation. It was there, in "Já com Fome", that we created the first school of the Rubber Tapper Project, built by the rubber tappers themselves. This school was named Wilson Pinheiro after our comrade and martyr, who was murdered in July 1980 at the STR in Brasília, which he chaired. For a while, Fazenda Bordon compulsorily compensated the former rubber tapper who owned the "Já com

Fome" plot and took over Seringal Nazaré. At that time, Bordon was the one who set the standard: if it started deforesting, the other farms, anywhere in Acre, would also start deforesting. It was as if there was a code, an established agreement, in which Bordon always gave the starting signal for the deforestation. But the comrades from Nazaré organized the resistance, took up the slogan "Já Com Fome" (Already Hungry), and this also became a standard for rubber tappers from other rubber plantations: if the Nazaré rubber tappers were capable of making that stand, the others also felt challenged to organize the standoffs to protect their rubber plantations. The Rubber Tapper Project also created an experiment in solidarity trade, called the Production and Consumption Center. Through this Center, we organized the rubber tappers' production, sold it outside the area so that we wouldn't be exploited by the marreteiros [muleteers], and bought the goods in Rio Branco. In this transaction, the rubber tappers were able to save a lot of money and see their hard work pay off, because they were free from that vicious type of trade, barter. Not to mention that they were also freed from the tax, a 10% discount on rubber. This was a tax that the bosses said they charged to compensate for the water it contained. With the Rubber Tapper Project, we also wanted to train health workers, following the example of China's Barefoot Doctors. Health workers who would value traditional treatments such as the natural herbal medicine of our region and also provide them with knowledge of the most varied types of illnesses, as many came from abroad. At the time, the union was supervised by the Ministry of Labor and to be a candidate for board positions you had to have civil documentation and many who couldn't read or write didn't have documents or, if they did, they had to declare themselves illiterate. This embarrassed them and discouraged them from running for these positions. We had to make the school a place to prepare staff for the union. It was important that it also functioned as an agent of local transformation – allowing the students to be instrumentalized



through the mastery of writing and mathematical operations – so that they could minimize the gap that separated them from the muleteers and farmers. These two groups passed them by in commercial transactions, in reading and writing letters or other communications, meeting reports, managing production and consumption centers, prescribing medicine leaflets, reading the Bible and in pastoral work. Since orality predominated on the rubber plantations and there was little written material, we decided to create a booklet with generative words, phrases and texts that reflected the reality of the rubber tapper in a way that combined the acquisition of literacy with the advancement of the students' political awareness. The booklet was given the name *Poronga* at the suggestion of two students: Dona Alzira and her husband, Chico Marinho. They made the following reflection: "Just as the *Poronga* lamp illuminates the path of the rubber tapper to free him from the dangers of the night in the jungle, the booklet will be a light to illuminate our path, freeing us from the evil of the bosses." As the achievements grew, driven by union struggles and, later, by the CNS, the demands of the activities developed by the Rubber Tapper Project also grew, so that it went from a proposal – at first marginalized and persecuted – to public policy, recognized by society and the state of Acre. Until 1998, the services provided by the state on the rubber plantations – with the exception of repression, which was always in favor of the landowners and against the rubber tappers – were only those of health and education, which the Rubber Tapper Project took to the most distant corners of the rubber plantations, having gone beyond the Nazaré rubber plantation and expanded to more than 15 rubber plantations in Xapuri, and to many others in the municipalities of Capixaba, Acrelândia, Epitaciolândia, Brasileia, Assis Brasil and Sena Madureira.



"The Seringueiro Project school was created by the Movement, for resistance. Initially it was only for adults, with volunteer teachers who were not rubber tappers, who came from the urban environment and followed the pedagogy developed by Paulo Freire."

MAURO ALMEIDA

I followed Chico Mendes' career in the 1980s, passing through Rio Branco on the way to Cruzeiro do Sul, at CNS meetings across the Amazon, at the Bordon standoff and at times when he visited my house in São Paulo or I visited him in Xapuri. I remember episodes of the Bordon standoff in 1986: one in Rio Branco and another in Xapuri, where some of Chico's traits were evident, such as his ability to mobilize, lead and gather forces where there seemed to be none. These abilities justify the comparison with Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The first occurred in a debate in Rio Branco, where Chico "summoned" those present to the Bordon standoff the following day, proposing to trade solidarity at a distance for physical presence in action. Chico was introducing a fundamental change in the character of the standoffs by sustaining the direct connection between city and forest, between intellectuals and workers. This change would reverse the isolation of the standoffs, against which he had already acted in 1985, when he asked Mary Allegretti for a major meeting in the capital of the Republic [Brasília], to give visibility to the rubber tappers' resistance. Chico recruited comrades like Gomercindo Rodrigues, to learn an unforgettable lesson about the solidarity and friendship of forest dwellers who resisted violence. At the end of the Bordon standoff, after three days of encampments and blockades, the police expelled the participants to Xapuri in single file. Marina Silva raised the spirits of our column by proposing to occupy the building of the Brazilian Forestry Development Institute (IBDF), thus turning the end of one standoff into the beginning of another. She must have been working with Chico because, when we arrived in Xapuri, the other column was already at the IBDF, surrounded by military police. Chico sent word to the newspapers in Rio Branco that 200 rubber tappers were at the IBDF and called for more rubber tappers to complete the announced number. When the reporters arrived, there were 200 rubber tappers. There was a lot of tension, but Chico controlled the situation. With the

publicity, the standoff at the IBDF functioned as the second stage of the Bordon standoff, questioning the federal administration and with the Catholic Church as a mediator to force the state government and the political class to speak out. That was Chico's magic: those he led heeded his call for a dangerous occupation because they trusted his ability to confront and then negotiate for political gain. The standoff, which began by summoning urban participants, was realized through heroism and ended with the public affirmation of the legitimacy of the rubber tappers' demands and their importance for society as a whole. It was Mary Allegretti who, in 1985, during the Sarney government, organized a meeting of rubber tappers in Brasília. There were around 120 participants at that meeting. From the point of view of a rural movement, the rubber tappers' proposal that appeared at that 1985 meeting in Brasília was part of a program of their demands for public policies for a population that was completely invisible, nobody knew it existed. In Brasília, they didn't even know what rubber tappers were, they thought they were rubber barons. It was complete invisibility. And Paulo Nogueira Neto (one of the great conservation biologists, one of those responsible for nominating and selecting conservation areas in the strict sense at the time of the military government) heard about a rubber tapper from Novo Aripuanã, Jaime da Silva Araújo, who was chosen by the group as the president of the National Council of Rubber Tappers. The CNS was an organization created in Brasília, when this same group was barred from entering the Rubber Superintendence (Sudeb) building, which received huge resources from the government. The rubber tappers, expelled from that environment, created an alternative to the National Rubber Council, which was meeting and in which they wanted to participate. "So, let's create the National Rubber Tappers' Council", and this name was born. Less well known was Chico's role in the creation of the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve, which took place after his death in March 1990. Since



1986, the Juruá rubber tappers had been mobilizing against the boss system still in force, with its “rubber road rents”, “dispatching” and violence against those who “sold rubber abroad” and against logging plans. In February 1988, during a CNS meeting, the leaders learned that a Dutch foundation had approved major support, opening up the organization’s possibilities for action. The question was how to extend this work to the Upper Juruá, with fake unions, a church hostile to popular movements, a lack of supportive NGOs, all-powerful bosses and justice far from the poor. At Steve Schwartzman’s suggestion to me, Chico proposed the name of Antonio Macedo to represent the CNS in Juruá. Macedo’s appointment, together with the allocation of resources, were Chico’s first important acts to support the residents of Juruá. Macedo drew up a project for the creation of cooperatives, schools and health centers, entitled the Tejo River Extractivist Reserve. The project, with its emphasis on cooperatives, was submitted to the BNDES. That was the end of the shed, even before the land situation was resolved. But the idea of a project with public funds was strange at the time and some union members reacted with suspicion. At a meeting in Ariquemes in August 1988, Chico used his moral authority to convince his colleagues. The project was approved in January of the following year. Although he had never been to Tejo, Chico was a key player in the creation of the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve. The last time I saw Chico was in November 1988, shortly before his death, in Curitiba, where we learned of the murder of a fellow union member. It was a warning of the risk Chico Mendes was taking on his return to Xapuri. But Chico never contemplated “taking a break” and instead consciously gave his life for the Movement.

“My meetings with Chico Mendes have left me with good memories, such as the trip to Assis Brasil on the muddy road, where everyone smoked while sitting on a load of gasoline drums and Chico changed his mind about the “hippies” who were going to Cuzco; or the meeting in Brasília, where Chico and the union leaders dismissed the advisors and decided on their own that the Extractivist Reserve would be public property with a concession of use to the residents.”



NICE MACHADO

I want to talk a bit about the history of Chico Mendes. For me, Chico Mendes was the main leader of the Amazon, of the peoples of the communities, of the forest, of the waters and of the countryside, of all of Brazil's biomes. Chico Mendes was our main teacher, our representative, a comrade who left a deep mark on our lives. It was from Dona Raimunda, our historic coconut breaker, that I learned about Chico Mendes and this whole struggle of the Peoples of the Forest, the Peoples of the Amazon, the Pantanal and the Cerrado. I was very young, and the person who took me to everything was Mrs. Raimunda. She was from Tocantins, I was from Maranhão. She would come up to me and say: "Nice, let's get together, let's unite with the strength of Father Josimo Tavares and Chico Mendes." I was about 14 years old, Chico Mendes was still alive and Mrs. Raimunda kept telling me that. Today I continue in this struggle, with the memory of these good people who guided me in the fight and who taught me the history of quilombola women, extractivist women, indigenous women, women of the tides, all the women of our resistance. As CNS women's secretary, I see the richness of this movement that values our traditional knowledge and, following the examples of Raimunda Gomes, Josimo Tavares and Chico Mendes, I feel inspired and ready to continue this resistance.

"Chico Mendes and Mrs. Raimunda, the two of them changed the history of us women and extractivist peoples in the Amazon."



Marcos Jorge Dias

CHICO MEN



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The First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers was a historic event held at the University of Brasília, attended by more than 100 representatives of rubber tappers, Brazil nut gatherers and fishermen from the states of Acre, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia and even Maranhão. Many of them left the forest for the first time and took several days to arrive in Brasília from the furthest reaches of the Amazon. The event was an initiative of the Rural Workers' Union of Xapuri, Acre, promoted by the Federation of Agricultural Workers of the State of Acre (Fetacre-Acre), the rubber tappers of Amazonas, the Association of Rubber Tappers and Soldiers of Rondônia, with the support of the Institute of Socio-Economic Studies (INESC), the Ministry of Culture/Pro-Memory Foundation and the University of Brasília (UnB). The call by union leader Chico Mendes was based on an agenda of great relevance at a time when the process of re-democratization was beginning in the country: the appropriation of land reform for rubber tappers, education, health and a policy of valuing native rubber. It was during this event that the CNS formulated the concept of the Extractivist Reserve as the land reform for rubber tappers, taking the Indigenous Reserves as inspiration.

Institute of Amazonian Studies – IE





João Roberto Ripper



CRISTOVAM BUARQUE

In 1985, as well as being dean, I was a professor of economics at the University of Brasilia. As a professor, I taught the importance of extractivism and the rubber cycles in the Brazilian economy. We university professors gave so many lectures on the Extractivist economy without knowing the reality, without ever having set foot on a rubber plantation. It was no different with me. That's why, when I was asked by the rubber tappers to bring the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers to UnB, I immediately agreed. For me, this was the way for us to get to know those who actually ran the Extractivist economy. Furthermore, as dean, I wanted to open up UnB to the Brazilian reality. For me, this was the chance, by bringing the rubber tappers into the University, to symbolically bring the Brazilian people themselves into the world of education. I remember that, in my speech at the opening of the meeting, I said that I had been a university professor for 20 years and never in my life had I seen a *terçado*, which is the machete used to make the cut that lets the latex out of the rubber tree, or a *poronga*, which is the lamp that the rubber tapper uses to light the road he walks at dawn to produce the latex, which then becomes rubber. I was learning these things there, with the rubber tappers. It was in this coexistence that I learned new things that have marked the rest of my life so far. I learned a lot from them about the importance of biological diversity. I learned from them that rubber tappers respect animals, even certain kinds of snakes, because those animals protect them from other animals and other dangers in the forest. It was a view of the ecological chain that people still don't have after spending four or five years at university; leaving without being able to understand basic concepts like those that the rubber tappers have mastered, because of the way they lived. We welcomed the rubber tappers, gave them our full support and spent some beautiful days when UnB was taken over by the Peoples of the Forest. Those were unforgettable days for me and for the University. To repay the

generosity of so much teaching, I made a gesture on behalf of the academic community: we set up a program at UnB to bring popular leaders to spend six months in Brasilia giving testimonies, writing, giving lectures and teaching university students. And the first leader to be invited, chosen by the newly formed National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), was Jaime Araújo, its first president. From this learning experience with the Peoples of the Forest, during the meeting that created the CNS, I came away with the feeling that human beings, being special in nature, have a responsibility to protect the environment in order to ensure the survival of the human species itself. I heard this from the rubber tappers at that meeting in 1985, long before the ecological wave which was growing in Brazil and around the world. That's why I say that having the rubber tappers and Chico Mendes at UnB was the greatest gift that a academic community could have received at that time. The most beautiful memory I have of Chico Mendes is his smile. To this day, I get emotional when I remember that smile, that way of looking at people with a smile. Some people still talk to me today and tell me that Chico Mendes only became so great because of the tragedy of his murder. But a man who was able to talk to his peers, the rubber tappers, and to the academic world as equals, with that open smile, we could not help but feel, by his physical presence and the ideas he defended, serene but with a lot of passion, that he really was a very human and special being. Today I feel proud to know that the change in land policy in Brazil began there, at the University of Brasilia, with a group of rubber tappers, many of them illiterate, but with deep knowledge, capable of producing an innovative and revolutionary land reform proposal, such as the Extractivist Reserves proposal they launched during the Meeting. In these 35 years of persevering ideas, but without the physical presence of Chico Mendes, I keep thinking of Professor Darcy Ribeiro, who used to say: "I feel fulfilled because I created a University and I created a Samba-drome, two essential things



for understanding Brazilian identity.” I can’t say that I created a University, because it was Darcy Ribeiro who created UnB. Nor can I say that I built a sambadrome, because that was also Darcy Ribeiro’s doing. But I can say with great pride that it was at the University of Brasilia, while I was dean and in the presence of Chico Mendes, that Brazil learned about Extractivist Reserves, and that the Brazilian people were able to learn a little about the profound knowledge of the Peoples of the Forest.

“Spending time close to Chico Mendes, even if only for a short time, because I only saw him two or three times in the run-up to the National Meeting of Rubber Tappers and a few other times during the Meeting, was one of the most remarkable experiences of my life.”



Darcy Ribeiro e Cristovam Buarque



FRANCISCO BARBOSA DE AQUINO

CHIQUEINHO BARBOSA

I'm Francisco Barbosa de Aquino, the popular Chiqueinho Barbosa, from Xapuri, in Acre, the land of Chico Mendes. Since I was a teenager, at the age of 16, I started working with the social movement, through the CEBs. The Xapuri Workers' Union was founded in 1977. I followed the movement, the meetings, Chico's articulations not only for the creation of the Union, but practically throughout his life in the union movement. Chico was a person who, in addition to partnerships with his colleagues in rural areas, extractivists and rural workers, also sought partnerships in universities and other movements. Wherever he went, Chico always tried to forge partnerships with everyone who defended human rights, the environment and social justice. Chico had this vision of the importance of partnerships that we called extras, but also of partnerships within communities. He watched the youth a lot. That was my case. In 1986, I came to Brasilia to represent the people of Acre and the Amazon on World Environment Day, in a meeting with the President of the Republic, who I think was José Sarney. I was very young and certainly only got to that meeting because Chico believed in youth. It was Chico who gave us rubber tappers this ability to believe in ourselves. A year earlier, in 1985, I came to the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, in Brasilia, which created the CNS, representing our region, our community, which is the Dois Irmãos Allotment, in the municipality of Xapuri. The First Meeting was a collaboration between Chico Mendes and Mary Allegretti, who organized our agenda in Brasilia and arranged the resources for us to come to the first National Congress of Rubber Tappers. It was a long and difficult trip, five days and five nights, ten days and ten nights just on the road, to and back. It was extremely difficult, but even so, rubber tappers came from Acre, Amazonas, Pará, Rondônia and even Maranhão. The condition was that we be seen because, until then, we

were invisible. After the First Meeting, we really stopped being invisible. It's impossible to forget that moment when, speaking on behalf of the CNS, which had just been created, we went to deliver our proposals to the congressmen and senators, to the authorities in Brasilia. The vast majority of them didn't even know what a rubber tapper was, they confused rubber tappers with rubber barons. For the vast majority, [we were] that "bunch of invisibles". Until then, for many people, everyone who was a person of the forest had no value—whether they were Indians, caboclos, rubber tappers—no one had any value, they were all invisible, all the same. I remember very well our comrade Jaime Araújo, who had just been elected president of the CNS, telling the bionic senators of the time how important it was for them to take a different view of the Amazon that included respect for the Peoples of the Forest. It was the first time that many of them had heard words like standoffs, allotments, rubber tappers, Peoples of the Forest. It was also the first time they heard about Extractivist Reserves, which Chico Mendes had just presented at the meeting that created the CNS. It was such a good idea that came to fruition, but unfortunately Chico was unable to see it happen, because the first Extractivist Reserves were only created in March 1990, after his death. But Chico's legacy lives on. Now, in November 2023, we are once again holding the 6th National Congress of Extractivist Populations here at the University of Brasilia. Yes, because since 2009, the CNS has kept its acronym but changed its name to include extractivists from all Brazilian biomes. Thanks to this Movement of ours, today our territories have electricity, roads, schools, health care and value for our work and our products. Fortunately, the blackout we suffered from the coup against President Dilma until the end of the last government has gone. In other words, now, in this third term of President Lula, at this very important moment in the



re-democratization of our country, we are in a position to make progress in implementing public policies that improve the lives of our people. Thanks to this Movement, that small seed planted by Chico Mendes and his comrades has withstood the attacks, taken root, grown into a tree and is bearing good fruit. That's why I'm very happy to be celebrating this 6th National Congress of Extractivist Populations [held in Brasilia from November 13 to 17, 2023] because, after these last six years of darkness, we've managed to come together to continue the struggle that Chico Mendes left us as a legacy: defending our rubber trees, our Peoples of the Forest and our Amazon because, in Chico's name, we know that we're defending humanity itself.

"We hope that, from now on, we will be able to demand that our governments consolidate the public policies that we, together with Chico Mendes, dreamed for our Peoples of the Forest and for the Amazon."



Marcos Jorge Dias



ÉLSON PACHECO DA SILVA

I'm Élson Pacheco da Silva. I'm a rubber tapper from Carauari, in the state of Amazonas, and I've been in this struggle since the CNS was created in 1985. At that time, there was already the Carauari Rural Workers' Union which, with the support of the Catholic Church, managed to send a group of rubber tappers to the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers. It was a very difficult journey from Manaus to Brasília, a very heavy one. We spent 72 hours getting from Manaus to Brasília, we spent five days in Brasília, and another 72 hours getting back. Not to mention the other two days it took us from Carauari to get to Manaus, on the way there and back. But it was worth it, because it was in Brasília that I met Chico Mendes. We spent those five days with him, discussing the problems faced by rubber tappers at the time. From there came the final document that was delivered to the Federal Government, including the proposal for Extractivist Reserves, one of the most important things about that meeting. With the Extractivist Reserves, we would have the right to use the land where we lived. It would still belong to the Union, but we would also own it because we were the ones who lived there and looked after that piece of forest. Until the Extractivist Reserves came into being, our situation was very difficult: the territory was controlled by the rubber barons, who, at least in our case, disappeared after our Reserve was created. And they really had to go! In our case in Carauari, it was easier, because we already had an association, which came to represent the residents of the Reserve. And we learned to look for projects. Today I think we're in a good position, let's say, because only those who lived through the time of the rubber barons can say how much our lives have improved. I always say that Chico Mendes' idea of creating the CNS and fighting for Extractivist Reserves was and continues to be very important in our lives. That's why they killed Chico Mendes, killed others and threatened to kill so many of us. Before, we only knew how to work and obey them. For fighting against that oppression, I myself was arrested and threatened with death. But, in the end, it was worth it, because I'm alive, I'm here, and

the boss [figure] is dead. I'm fine, I'm aware that I've made my contribution, I continue to support this struggle, because there are still many things to be done, but that's something for the younger generation now, I'm retired and I'm happy!

"Chico Mendes told us that with the Extractivist Reserves, the government would be able to invest in rubber tapper projects. Over time, we saw that, in fact, the demarcation of the Extractivist Reserves facilitated the entry of projects for our benefit."



Marcos Jorge Dias



JOSÉ ALVES DA COSTA ZÉ SERINGUEIRO

I'm Zé Seringueiro, from the state of Amazonas, from the municipality of Carauari, that's how they know me. We started out fighting against the bosses, against the rubber barons. I was a rubber tapper. I started tapping rubber from the age of nine. We kept organizing, getting stronger in the struggle and then, at the First Meeting of the CNS, we had that wonderful opportunity to see Chico Mendes presenting the proposal for Extractivist Reserves which, as we know, is the rubber tappers' agrarian reform. And this achievement is the result of our organization in the associations, the unions and the CNS. Unfortunately, I had to take some time away from the Movement, because there came a time when I had to take my children to the city to study. Nowadays, thank God, they're all graduated; they all have their own families, thank God. And, thanks to the life we had in the interior, everyone knows how to respect nature, everyone works for the benefit of nature and I too, in a way, still work, because I'm away from the rubber plantation, but I continue to support the organization of the CNS and all my fellow extractivists. I remain firm, always supporting the rubber tappers' struggle.

"I met Chico Mendes at the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in Brasilia in 1985. We spent five days working together, exchanging ideas with him about our struggle, thinking together and learning from him about the CNS and the Extractivist Reserves. It was a wonderful experience, unforgettable for the rest of my life."



Marcos Jorge Dias



LUIZ GONZAGA GOMES DA SILVA

I represent the state of Rondônia, but I'm from the state of Acre, from the town of Feijó. At the time I was born, the town of Feijó was a rubber plantation. Today it's one of Acre's major cities. My father was a rubber soldier. So, I can say that I was born on a rubber plantation, I grew up on a rubber plantation, I got married, I raised my children, all on the rubber plantation. In total, I had 14 children, but today I only have 11 alive, six men and five women, the youngest of whom is 16. In 1985, I went to the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, from Rondônia to Brasília, by bus. It was a five-day, five-night trip, breaking up the dirt road by bus. There were times when we had to get off the bus and push it out of the mud. All this in order to take part in the meeting with the late Chico Mendes and some comrades like Raimundão [Raimundo Mendes] and Júlio Barbosa, who we've known for a long time. Then, for defending the Extractivist Reserves, I was stonewalled by a lot of loggers, but I continue resisting, because I think that exchanging a human life for a load of mahogany is a very cruel exchange. That's why I'm still here, fighting. Before, we were subjugated by the bosses, the bosses believed they were in charge of our lives. They said they owned everything and, in the end, our struggle showed that they owned nothing. The sad thing was that we saved ourselves from the threats, but Chico Mendes, no, they killed Chico Mendes. I think they thought that killing Chico Mendes would put an end to this movement, but that's not how it happened. They killed a member of the family, but the family grew. How many Chico Mendes are there today? Today, Chico Mendes is not just in Brazil, no, even abroad there are Chico Mendes. It was a legacy that he left to his comrades and to the younger ones. Because I say we're already at the end of the road, but there are a lot of young people out there continuing the fight. I think, I don't think, I know that the younger ones won't let this story end, they won't let the ball drop.



Marcos Jorge Dias

"Chico didn't just fight for our cause, he fought for the future of our children. If it weren't for Chico's leadership in our struggle, what would become of our children, our grandchildren?"





José Ivanildo Brilhante



MANUEL DE NAZARÉ

I am Manuel de Nazaré Oliveira da Silva, known as Seu Nazaré. I'm the son of a rubber tapper, the son of a rubber soldier, from the island of Marajó, who died at the age of 86, still tapping rubber. My whole region is Extractivist; the whole municipality of Afuá is Extractivist; the whole island has a large number of rubber trees. We've been here as rubber tappers since the 1930s, since the first Rubber Cycle. Our parents, who were from the northeast of Brazil, were attracted to the Amazon to exploit the rubber that the United States needed to make the tires for its battle tanks. My grandparents came from the hills of Baturité, in Ceará, fleeing the drought. They came to the Amazon attracted by the dream of abundance, but what they found here was a life of semi-slavery. Here the boss, who claimed to be the owner of the property, invented a working relationship that doesn't exist in the Land Statute: he invented the idea of the boss and the customer, but there is no customer in the Land Statute. There are squatters, sharecroppers, partners, but there are no customers, but they created [this relationship] and abused their creation. It worked like this: the person who worked in an area gave everything he produced to the boss. What he produced, the rubber and other agricultural things he produced, had to be sold to the boss, at the price the boss wanted to pay. If the rubber was worth, for example, R\$10, he would pay R\$1. So we were exploited when buying and selling. We had to deliver everything we produced the way he wanted. And if you complained, he would send you away with no right to anything. In the 1970s, with the arrival of the CEBs, the Catholic Church gave us a huge boost in clarifying our rights and duties, especially our rights, which were being violated. We became aware of this and organized ourselves against this injustice that had been perpetuated for many, many years. I had the opportunity to meet Chico Mendes in 1983, at the founding of the CUT in São Paulo. After I met Chico, we started meeting all over Brazil, taking part in debates and creating unions. And when it was 1985, I came here, to Brasília, to take part in the founding of the CNS. I came from Pará, on the border with



Agência Câmara de Notícias



Amapá; we came from there with Pedro Ramos, who was already a member of the Movement in Amapá. We spent a week traveling by boat from Macapá to Belém, because the boat broke down. Then we took the bus from Belém to Brasília. We left well in advance, because the time we would spend getting to Brasília was unpredictable. We had to come, because life was impossible for us, the bosses controlled our entire production, and we had to find a way to end that exploitation. And we did the right thing, because today, fortunately, there are no more bosses on the rubber plantations. But everything we achieved was achieved through a lot of struggle by the associations, the unions, the CNS and the organizations that support our struggle, both inside and outside the Amazon. In 1989, the first Extractivist Reserves were created. In 2006, the Lula government's Union Patrimony Secretariat (SPU) recognized us as legitimate residents of the Amazon Rainforest and gave us a TAU (Term of Authorization for Use), which is not a definitive title, but guarantees the rights of rural workers. In 2008, also under the Lula government, INCRA recognized these existing traditional families, but we weren't actually settled, we were just recognized. That's why the agro-extractivist settlements are called settlements of existing traditional families, with all their traditional customs, respecting the boundaries. It sounds like it was very easy. It wasn't. We lost many comrades. I myself was marked for death. I lost my freedom. I had to run away. I talked to Chico a lot, I met him a lot at the CUT Congress in 1983, when he was already being threatened. He told me about the situation he was suffering and we exchanged ideas. And I said to him: "Chico, you have to leave Acre because otherwise they're going to kill you, they're going to take your life." And he always replied: "But I can't, because it's already in my blood, I can't run away from the struggle any more. I have to go all the way". And so it was.

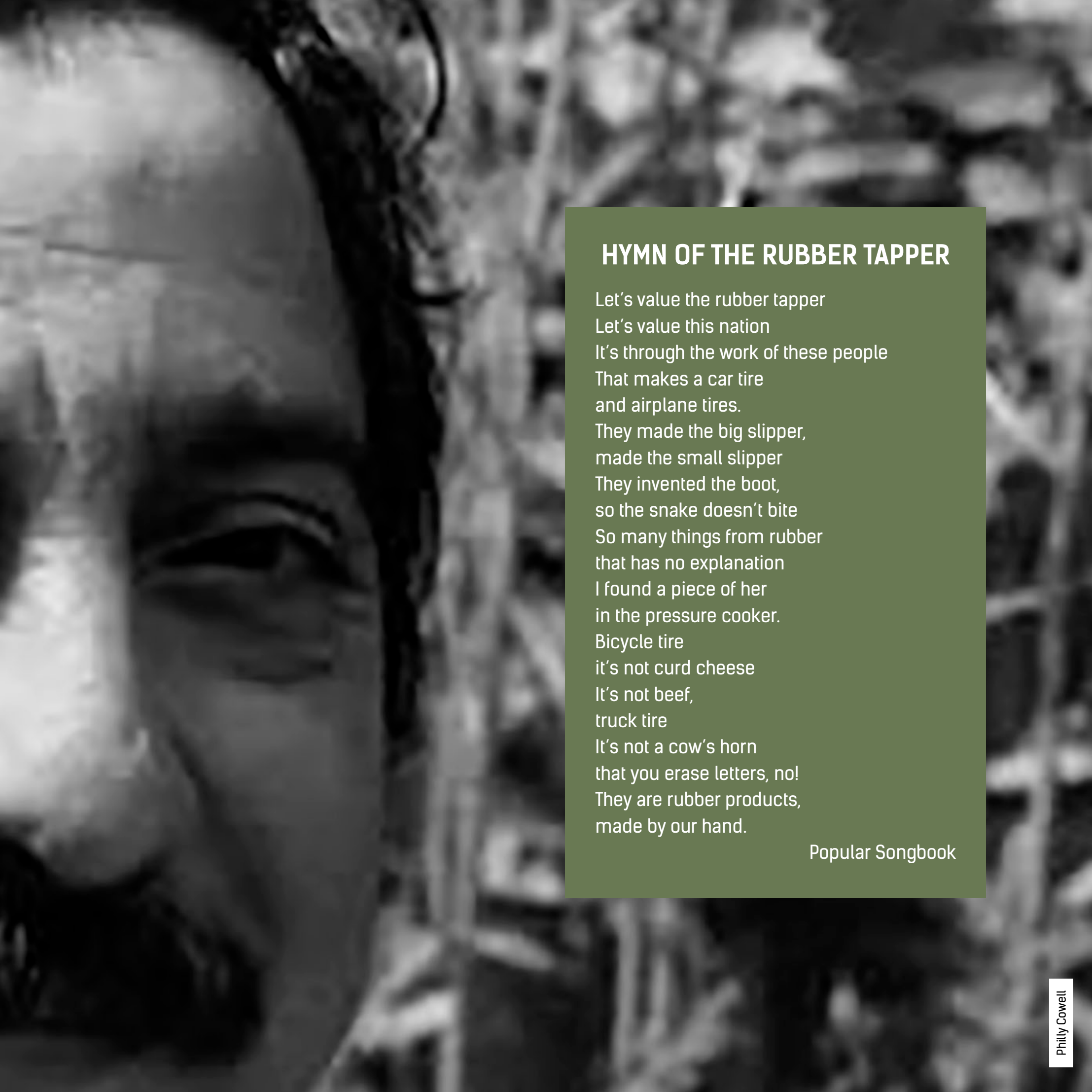
"With the death of Chico Mendes, we have lost a great comrade. But on top of his blood, we took an oath not to lose heart, and that's why we continue to organize our resistance throughout the Amazon."



Marcos Jorge Dias







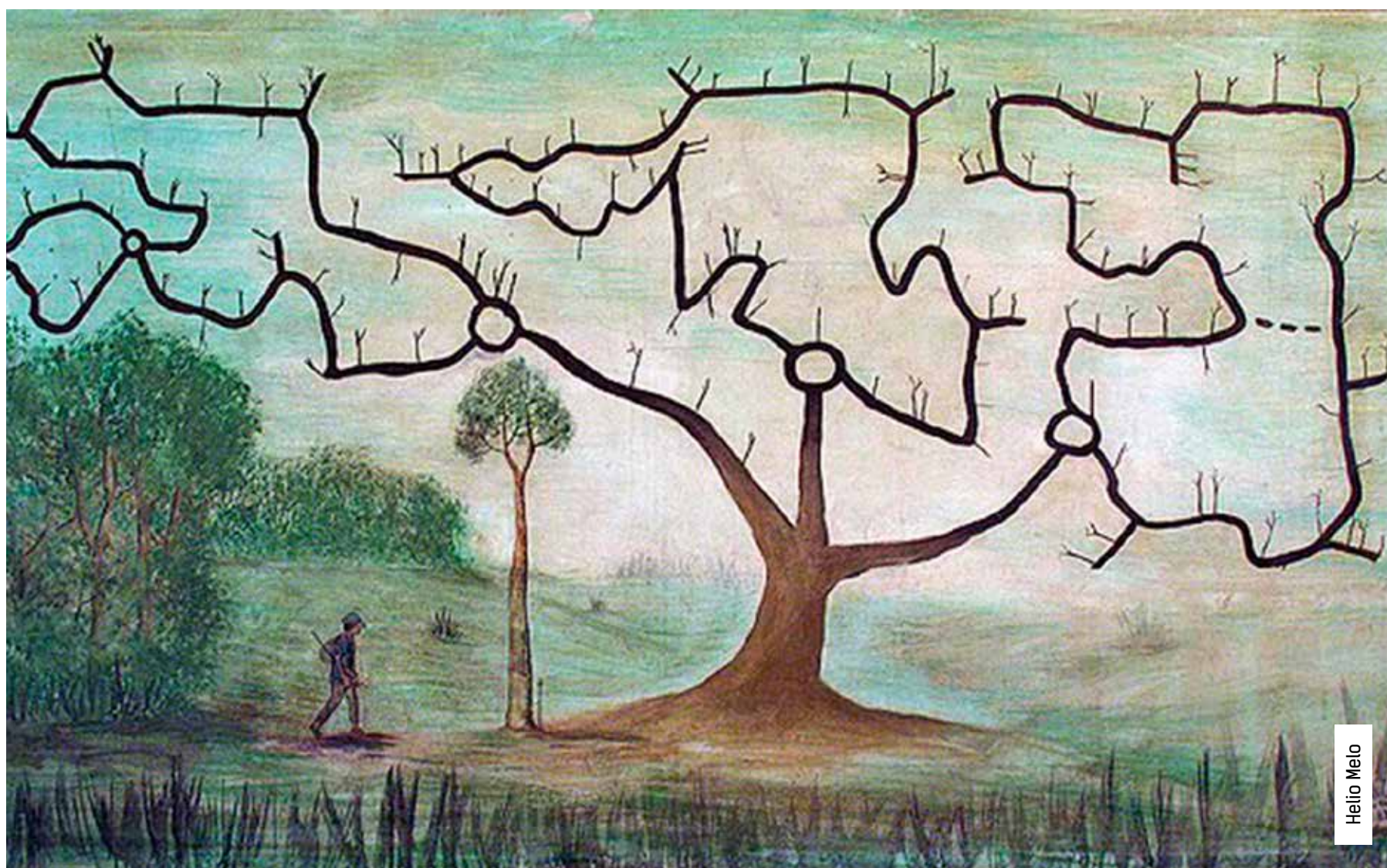
HYMN OF THE RUBBER TAPPER

Let's value the rubber tapper
Let's value this nation
It's through the work of these people
That makes a car tire
and airplane tires.
They made the big slipper,
made the small slipper
They invented the boot,
so the snake doesn't bite
So many things from rubber
that has no explanation
I found a piece of her
in the pressure cooker.
Bicycle tire
it's not curd cheese
It's not beef,
truck tire
It's not a cow's horn
that you erase letters, no!
They are rubber products,
made by our hand.

Popular Songbook

EXTRACTIVIST RESERVES





OS POVOS





The proposal for Extractivist Reserves is as follows: the land is supposedly in the hands of large landowners. In the whole area of Acre, just ten owners dominate control over all the land. There are ten bosses. What we want is the following: for these lands to become the domain of the State [national], for the government to expropriate these areas and to concede right of use to the inhabitants of the forest, in other words, the rubber tappers. We are proposing [cooperativism], and we are prioritizing a better way of selling rubber and nuts. We want to create artisanal industries to give priority to the other riches. You see, when we defend the Extractivist Reserve, it's because we believe that the Extractivist Reserve is ecologically viable for Brazil, for the Amazon and for humanity. We're not just defending the rubber economy, not just the Brazil nut economy, but also copaiba and the Extractivist products that are found throughout the forest and which are being destroyed, such as tucumã coconut, patoá, açai... There's a lack of research in the Amazon. The medicinal trees that are impossible to count are a great example. Research is lacking. All it takes is for the government to take our request seriously and give us this opportunity. In a short time, we will prove that it is possible to conserve the Amazon and turn it into an economically viable region for Brazil and the world. We're clear on that!

Chico Mendes

ATANAGILDO DE DEUS MATOS GATÃO

A struggle is a process built up by many leaders. One of these leaders was Wilson Pinheiro, a pioneer of resistance in the Acre standoffs. Chico Mendes was another great leader. They are both symbols of our collective struggle in defense of the forest. There were also people who came from outside, who understood our thinking, joined our struggle and helped us organize our processes of mobilization, articulation, organization and production. People in solidarity who opened doors for the Peoples of the Forest in Brazil and around the world. That's why it will never be possible, with one gunshot or a handful of gunshots, to eliminate an idea that has been consolidated through a collective process, where the struggle in defense of the forest has always been a struggle of all the Peoples of the Forest, with the partner strength of their allies. It was from this collective process that the idea of Extractivist Reserves emerged, as our proposal for land reform in the Amazon. The Extractivist Reserves are, to this day, the most modern sustainable development model that exists, because it values the land itself and protects the forest as a whole: the water, the greenery, the air, the products and the communities. It's a model that takes care of the forest and the communities that live in the forest. That's where we really start to change: because in an Extractivist Reserve, the community is the one that learns how to manage itself. It makes mistakes and gets things right, and in doing so it becomes the owner of its present and future. Many organizations helped us structure our ideas, showed them to the rest of Brazil and the world, or even contributed resources, food and, in the hardest times, used clothes. The same happened with so many people who were always supporters and comrades. But there were and are also people who, even with good intentions, got in the way and continue to do so. People who think that the Peoples of the Forest should live in total isolation. People who don't understand that our children, like the children of any citizen, want to improve their lives, get an education, be healthy, eat well and dress well. We also like good clothes, beautiful

things, information and modern technology. We just don't want to destroy our forest to get more material things. We want all the Extractivist Reserves to have their management plans; for there to be resources for them to be implemented; for our products to be valued; and for our cultures to be respected. To take care of the forest, we need to make people and the government aware of the need for Management Plans. A Management Plan makes it easier to monitor, correct problems, find solutions, carry out projects and protect natural resources.

"We want to live well, live happily, with simplicity. We want sustainable development, with quality of life and protection of the forest."





EUGÊNIO SCANNAVINO NETTO

My first contact with the Amazon was in 1977–1978. I went to the Juruá Valley, in Acre, a bit on a whim. I was a medical student. I met Terri Aquino and read the first issue of Varadouro, the “Jungle Newspaper”, which I still have today. Going down the rivers by boat, I photographed the rubber tapper reality of life. The rubber barons were still there. In that giant piece of forest, it was a reality of slavery. I documented this history by going down the Juruá and Purus rivers, and I had to get out of there hiding in a boat, in the middle of a ton of dried pirarucu fish. Soon after Chico Mendes was murdered in 1989, we went to the First Meeting of Forest Peoples, which was also the Second National Meeting of Rubber Tappers. We put on the cultural activity, already with TV Mocaranga, the result of the work of Projeto Saúde & Alegria, an NGO that has been working in the Amazon since 1987. Chico’s death was a tragedy foretold. We already expected that someone among us would die in that story. In 1990, then-President Fernando Collor restricted the resources of the National Environment Fund (FNMA), blocked the funds for the communities’ projects and freed the price of rubber, which fell a lot. The Extractivist Reserves began to empty out. He also stopped the reserve projects in progress. At the time, I was one of the representatives of the Amazon NGOs at the Eco-92 Preparatory Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. We started putting pressure on the Brazilian government there. On a Saturday, we got a five-minute slot to speak to the UN media. We informed the Brazilian government that if Collor didn’t consolidate the Extractivist Reserves and

“When Chico Mendes died, it dawned on everyone: we had to keep fighting. Today we see that Chico’s death was not in vain. He motivated us, we articulated ourselves more, we sought international support, because we were very isolated. Chico gave visibility to this whole struggle.”

Indigenous Lands project, didn’t return the rubber subsidy and didn’t release the resources from the FNMA [National Environment Fund], we would use the space to denounce that the whole Brazilian effort for Eco-92 was a big rip-off. We called all the press and said we had a bombshell to reveal on Saturday. The Brazilian ambassador was desperate. We said it wasn’t open to negotiation. When it was midday on Friday (it should have been eight o’clock in Brazil), he called Brazil from a pay phone in one of the Conference corridors and asked for three hours. By the end of the afternoon, the decree was signed. The

Movement decided it wanted to have a voice. The GTA began to emerge. There was a moment when the representatives of the developed countries (G7) arrived, and the Minister for the Environment said that there was no room for NGOs there, because it was exclusively a government issue. We said there was going to be a complaint that this was a suspicious agreement with money from the World Bank. Through this pressure, we managed to get seats on the program’s coordinating committee. In 1978, the Brazilian

Development Institute (IBDF) tried to expel the residents of the Tapajós Reserve and the communities resisted, even with the influence of the struggles in which Chico Mendes participated. But while in Acre the focus was on creating the Extractivist Reserve, in Pará a National Forest had been created on top of the communities. This struggle was important for the Conservation Units System Law (SNUC), which was discussed throughout the 1990s, to recognize the presence of native populations.





Projeto Saúde e Alegria



LÚCIA HELENA DE OLIVEIRA CUNHA

After “a hundred years of solitude”, the rubber tappers came out of the forest and showed Brazil and the world that they were a wise people: a people with political projects woven from their centuries-old experience of life in the rainforest, proposing, in their own way, to combine development and nature conservation. Their main spokesperson was a genuine social-historical subject – Chico Mendes – who announced the proposal for Extractivist Reserves as a model of land reform for the Amazon. From 1985 onwards, the Extractivist Reserves gained prominence on the national and international scene, undergoing extensive debate in different social sectors (governments, political parties, universities, research institutions and social movements), which gave visibility to the rubber tappers who were the protagonists of the proposal. Before this “appearance”, rubber tappers were seen as beings out of time. However, operating in intertwined social networks, the rubber tappers’ movement inaugurated innovative political practices in the 1980s (or since the 1970s, with the standoffs), articulating various mediation entities at regional, national and international levels. Chico Mendes’ death contributed to the establishment of Extractivist Reserves in the Amazon – one of his main objectives in the struggle, also the object of various local pressures and the choice to build his destiny as a being and as a leader, to have life to fight in defense of life: “I want to live, to save the Amazon!” Chico bridged the gap between the particular and the universal, connecting the Amazon with the life of the planet. This was a lengthy process, manifested sometimes through shouting, sometimes through dialogue, sometimes through silence; as if, listening to the sounds of the forest, he was weaving his struggle through the invisible threads that intertwine the branches of the trees with the species of living beings that make up the vastness of the Amazon.

“Today, the fight in defense of the Amazon is not only of interest to us, rubber tappers and Indians, but to the whole of Brazilian society, the whole world and the whole planet.”
Chico Mendes



maryallegretti.blogspot.com



MANOEL CUNHA

I grew up among the 14 beaches of the Juruá River, in the state of Amazonas. I didn't get to know a city until I was 24, when home remedies were no longer enough to treat malaria. I was already married, with two children, and I knew about the terrible exploitation of the bosses over the rubber tappers, but I didn't know how to fight it. I'm now married, have five children and live in the Médio Juruá Extractivist Reserve. It takes three hours to fly from Manaus and another 30 hours by boat to get to my house. It's very expensive to travel home, more expensive than going abroad. So I spend three or four months isolated from my family, then come back and spend a week or two in the community. In 1990, we were visited by some comrades from the Movement for Basic Education (MEB), who had come from Acre to do grassroots work in our region. They talked about the struggles of Chico Mendes and the achievements of the Movement. We started a meeting in the middle of the night that didn't end until two in the morning. There began our struggle to stop being "customers", as we were called, and to organize our communities in search of improvements for our people. The bosses, as well as selling us expensive goods, wouldn't let us plant beans, rice, manioc or watermelon because, according to them, we should be spending our time cutting rubber trees in the fields. It was sad to live always giving your blood without knowing what for. The people of Acre talked about the CNS and we got excited, knowing that it was possible to live without so much humiliation. In 1993, we created the Carauari Association of Rural Producers (Asproc), which took care of marketing our products. We stopped selling to the "motorboats [regatões]", the middlemen. Then came the second blow: the bosses tried to prevent us from entering the forest, saying it was their land. So we fought for the creation of an Extractivist Reserve in the Médio Juruá and, in 1997, we succeeded. The Médio Juruá ended up becoming two Reserves, because at the time, a madman from IBAMA said that by law a Reserve couldn't be created on both sides of the river. Nobody has ever seen this law, but the

area was first considered a Reserve on one side, and the other only in 2003, as a Sustainable Development Reserve (RDS). This type of Reserve wasn't our passion, because it prioritizes land regularization less, but we gave in because the state government was creating its Reserves more quickly. Asproc works with both Reserves and, through this work, we have managed to raise funds to support the extractivists with equipment to support production, subsidized credit, basic sanitation, marketing of products without middlemen and other benefits. In addition, we have made it possible to enter the Conab advance purchase system. All this taking into account both Reserves. I'm telling this story to show a little of our collective struggle in defense of life and freedom for the people of the forest.

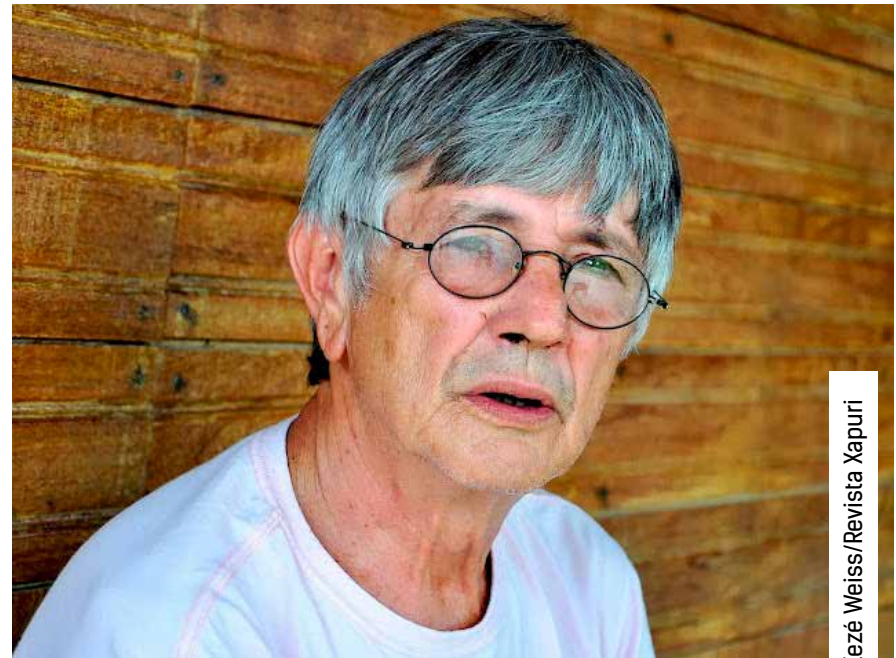
"Here we walk with joy and hope, always remembering our comrade Chico Mendes."



TERRI AQUINO

I was born and raised in Acre, but when I was young I spent some time in Rio de Janeiro to study Sociology and Politics at PUC in 1972. Then I stayed in Brasília to finish my master's degree in Anthropology at UnB in 1977. When I returned, I went to work with an indigenous Kaxinawá group from the Jordão River, who were rubber tappers. In 1975, I did field research on these groups of indigenous rubber tappers on the Envira, Tarauacá and Jordão rivers, and I had also found a group of them on a rubber plantation called Fortaleza, where they were no longer subject to any bosses. I returned the following year, fascinated. They asked for help, to get funding for harvest and cultivation, from the former Superintendence for the Development of Rubber (Sudevea). I presented a project on the art and culture of the Kaxinawá to UnB and it worked. At the same time, the rubber tappers were coming out of the isolation of the price of rubber; of keeping the tapper in the allotment; of buying the cheapest products in the shed. In 1985, when the CNS was created, there was already this idea that Chico provoked by calling in researchers who worked with the rubber tappers to discuss a format for land use in the forest, inspired by the indigenous model of public land, collective ownership, with a concession of use for the community, which became the Extractivist Reserves. After the damage caused by the BR-364 highway, the IDB's new project in the region included an environmental protection plan. Unfortunately, the Alliance between rubber tappers, indigenous people and environmentalists only materialized after Chico's death, but before that it took several important initiatives. One of them was to call Antonio Macêdo, who had a lot of experience at FUNAI, to a meeting with Mauro Almeida and me in April 1988. At the meeting, Chico asked Macêdo to look after the creation of the Extractivist Reserve in the Upper Juruá. Macêdo used his indigenous experience to listen to the communities, formulate cooperatives and draw up a project for the BNDES, including the neighboring communities of 17 or 20 indigenous groups. More than 500,000 hectares of forest were involved in this area, which

was born integrating indigenous people and rubber tappers. When we look at Acre, we see that there is now a sum of all these struggles, with Extractivist Reserves, Indigenous Lands and environmental reserves forming a mosaic and an ecological corridor over eight million hectares, occupying almost half of the state. The result is incredible: a continuous corridor, a beauty of preserved nature. This was an effect of the struggles of Chico Mendes and our Peoples of the Forest.



Zezé Weiss/Revista Xapuri

"Chico Mendes had an environmentalist spirit, a sensitivity that made him realize that something had to be changed."





Cleudon França/Memorial Chico Mendes



PEOPLES OF THE FOREST ALLIANCE

With this experience in Xapuri of holding the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in Brasilia, other leaders who had been living in isolation began to be discovered at this meeting, which awakened their consciousness and began to expand this struggle throughout the Amazon. And the proposal for an alliance between the main indigenous leaders emerged. From then on, the rubber tappers' struggle was unified. With the creation of the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), the possibility of maintaining contact with the leadership of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) was considered. Contact was made through Ailton Krenak, and from there with Ubiraci Brasil. The discussion began to broaden and today there are meetings of Indians with the participation of rubber tappers and the Alliance is beginning to expand. At a summit level, it has expanded. All that remains now is to establish this Alliance at the grassroots level between the Indians and the rubber tappers. It's called the Alliance of the Peoples of the Amazon Rainforest (Testimony given to Lucélia Santos, May 1988).

Chico Mendes





AILTON KRENAK

Today I wonder how the Alliance's agenda in those early years had such a strong, mobilizing appeal. I think this appeal had something to do with the experience of novelty from the winds of the new Constitution [of 1988]. It was in this rich environment that Chico projected much more than ideas, he projected a utopia. With his calm presence, with his own tone of voice, there was never any exaltation in his speech and, even when he spoke of the injustices, the hard things that happened to him and to the forest, his way of expressing them was always so loving and so good that, instead of despair, what Chico always conveyed was hope. Chico's presence as a person of peace and dialogue, at a time when Brazil was going through its process of re-democratization, was marked in a very special way by that little plant that sprouted in the midst of that environment of change and which we call the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. Despite all the difficulties, because nothing was easy and we didn't even know if the seed we planted would come to fruition or not, when there was still no thought of articulating various sectors of society, our Alliance brought together indigenous people, rubber tappers, river dwellers and a whole bunch of other people under one banner, in a welcoming space for practicing partnership and solidarity. I was so enthusiastic about that positive energy that I think it's this energy that motivates me to this day. I was so happy with this "path" when we opened that Embassy of the Peoples of the Forest, in 1991, in São Paulo, during Luiza Erundina's time as mayor, when Marilena Chauí, Paulo Freire, Gianfrancesco Guarnieri and a host of other interesting people became part of the municipal government, giving our peoples and our citizens clear signs of hope. Those were joyful seeing the civil struggle grow, seeing how strong the citizens' struggle was becoming, with the Indians and rubber tappers even having an embassy in the country's largest city. An embassy that excited leaders all over Brazil just by existing! At our embassy, the agenda was set by the Peoples of the Forest themselves, the way they were known at the time, because there wasn't yet this

concept, which appeared in the late 1990s, of calling indigenous people, rubber tappers and river dwellers Traditional Populations. Before, it was something stronger, from us, generating a lot of self-esteem. At the same time as we brought together people from the villages and Extractivist Reserves around the Embassy of the Peoples of the Forest, we also set up the Center for Training and Support for Indigenous Research in Goiás, in the Center-West region of Brazil, with the Catholic University of Goiás. The Center had the late comrade Wanderley de Castro, who came from long journeys with Chico Mendes through the forest, while making, with the English director Adrian Cowell, the series entitled "The Decade of Destruction", which shook world public opinion with denunciations of the devastation of the Amazon, and which shows Chico holding the standoffs in the areas where the Extractivist Reserves of Acre are now established. This research center in Goiás was the starting point for the training programs for indigenous educators and researchers, and even for the agroforestry agents that exist throughout the country today. Without this trajectory, we wouldn't have opened the door to universities for the Peoples of the Forest. It is with this entrepreneurial energy that we have consolidated, in the Alto Rio Juruá region, an initiative like that of the Ashaninka, who set up their organization, Apiutxa, and the Yorenka Átame Centre, from where Benki Ashaninka and his companions show the world an alternative that goes beyond the limits of the Ashaninka Indigenous Land and the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve. There, from the bends of the Juruá River, we can see the engaging experience of the Ashaninka, not only with their own people, but also with the villages and communities around them, opening up new perspectives for the development of an economy based on the richness of our forests and practices based on traditional knowledge. And it was following the ideals of Chico Mendes, who believed in the importance of informing the world about our Alliance, that we went on that tour with Milton Nascimento to California, Washington and New York in the early 1990s. We held



that Amazon Week in New York, transforming that moment and our space at Amanaka'a [NGO] into a sounding board to send our message to the whole world every year. I feel proud to have participated in all this with a group so committed to understanding that the forest is a sacred place where life is fully realized. Throughout this journey, Chico's presence was always very much alive and very important. Even today, his presence is so strong and so inspiring that I often feel that he is right here by our side, marching with us. When I reflect on this, I always think of Chico Mendes as a curious, restless and instigating human being, who was always looking for alternatives to improve the quality of life for the Peoples of the Forest. At the Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest held in Brasilia in 2007, this was the appeal that emerged: not only the Amazon Rainforest, but all forests are the reason and cause for our mobilization and our fight to protect the planet and its biodiversity. In all biomes, we have incalculable wealth to support life, and making responsible use of these resources, protecting this wealth for future generations, is our main mission. José Lutzenberg, who was a friend and supporter of Chico and the Alliance's fight, used to say that we were nature's gardeners. I would add that we are the warriors of the forest, because we remain firm in our decision to ensure that the legacy of Chico Mendes and the Alliance of Forest Peoples lives on forever.



"Chico Mendes projected much more than ideas, Chico Mendes projected a utopia."

Adriana Moura



ALMIR NARAYAMOGA SURUÍ

I am Almir Narayamoga Suruí, leader of the Paiter-Suruí people and coordinator of the Metareilá Association of the Paiter-Suruí Indigenous People. I am an indigenous leader who, at the age of 17, began to take on the responsibility of fighting against the domination of non-indigenous people, based on the decision of my Paiter-Suruí people, who felt that I could seek the best path for our future and for the future of the Amazon Rainforest, where we live. In 1997, I was coordinator of the Indigenous Movement in Rondônia. At the time, I didn't think that a young indigenous man of only 19 would be able to lead 43 Indigenous Peoples. It was a [big] responsibility, because I had to understand what each of those peoples wanted, and then I had to consolidate all of that within a single project for the collective future. These 43 peoples and one more, the non-indigenous people who make up the entire population of Rondônia, Brazil and the world. Since 1986, with Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak at the helm, the traditional leaders of the Amazon had been discussing an Alliance of the Peoples of the Forest, and we began planning how to build this great Alliance to work with rubber tappers, environmentalists, social movements, landless people, small farmers, with everyone who had the same feeling of defending the Forest. We felt the need to ally ourselves with all of them to fight for the forest together. We knew exactly what we wanted, but we couldn't get others to understand it properly. So we, the Paiter-Suruí, tried to learn more

Portuguese in order to be able to talk and better protect our lands. It was in this search that, in 1998, we faced a great challenge: neither I nor anyone else from my people knew that the word diagnosis existed or what it meant. I wanted to know my land better, I wanted to know what was on it, because I understood that by knowing my land better, I could find the best solution to my people's problems. I needed to make a diagnosis of the situation on my land. We made the diagnosis with the support of the World Bank. The first Indigenous Land demarcated in Rondônia was

ours, that of the Paiter-Suruí people. Many people think that Indigenous Peoples don't have the capacity to walk and to design their own destiny. But we do. When we made our diagnosis, our planning and our management plan, we showed that we have a lot of capacity to plan and execute what we plan. The diagnosis of our Indigenous Land showed that around 248,000 hectares of our forest had already been cleared by loggers. Faced with this reality, we sought support and set up a reforestation project within our territory to plant over a million seedlings.

Today, we have planted thousands of seedlings of native plants alone. To make people aware of how we think and how we protect the forest, we partnered with Google. We believe that technology is important in the struggle of Indigenous Peoples. We also believe that we need to tell our story, because this in a way protects the lives of our leaders who, like myself, are threatened with death.

"Unfortunately, even after all this time, some leaders are still marked for death. I want to say to those who threaten, to those who continue to kill various leaders in the Amazon, to those who ended the life of Chico Mendes, that everyone has the sacred right to life and that we will not give up defending our rights."



STANDING FOREST

THE OLD PAITER WARRIOR
 WALKED THROUGH THE WOODS OF LAPETANHA
 HE DRANK WATER FROM THE VINE
 AND HE JOKED WITH THE HUMMINGBIRD
 WHO GUIDED THE OTHER ANIMALS
 ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FOREST
 MEANWHILE, THE LOGGER WAS CUTTING
 THE CHESTNUT TREE WHERE I WAS
 THE NEST OF THE ROYAL SPARROWHAWK
 AND THE ENVIRONMENT MINISTER
 AUTHORIZED THE KILLING OF ISOLATED INDIANS
 THE OLD PAITER WARRIOR
 HE MENTORED THE YOUNG PAITER WARRIORS
 PROTECTING THE FOREST
 FROM THE AMBITION OF POLITICIANS
 IN THE NAME OF GROWTH.

ALMIR SURUI



Vozes da Floresta



ÁLVARO TUKANO

I'm Tukano from the Balaio Indigenous Land in the state of Amazonas, in the municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira. I am a founder of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, along with Ailton Krenak, Chico Mendes and many other comrades. I'm proud to be part of this movement, because the Alliance is very important to all the Peoples of the Forest. The history of the Alliance plays a huge role for the new leaders, because it gives strength to the struggle of these new leaders to keep our forests standing. The Alliance had a broad meaning, because we were able to fight together, indigenous people and rubber tappers. We, who started out apart, coming from such different worlds, ended up joining forces in the struggle, because we discovered that we have the same interests, that the best thing for us will always be to be on the same side, for the forest. We made this Alliance to defend life and nature for the indigenous people, for the rubber tappers, for the peoples who live and those who don't live in the forest. That's why many indigenous people went to Xapuri at the time of the standoffs, to help Chico Mendes fight against the enforcers and the logging. And, after his death, I went there myself, visited the Extractivist Reserves, visited his house and his grave, in search of more strength to keep fighting. With Chico Mendes, we learned to always look for allies, not just wait for the authorities. For example, in order to demarcate Indigenous Lands we always need a lot from the authorities, but our Lands wouldn't have been demarcated if it hadn't been for our struggle, if it hadn't been for the Alliance, if it hadn't been for the self-demarcation initiative we took years ago. And if the rubber tappers have their Extractivist Reserves today, it's because they, with our help, held the standoffs their own way. If it hadn't been for Chico Mendes doing things his way, getting together with the indigenous people, becoming friends with the press and seeking allies abroad, we wouldn't be here today talking about the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. I went to the Alliance meeting in 1989. Chico had already died. It was very sad, but also very beautiful, because everyone was committed to continuing

Chico's struggle. Today Chico is no longer here, but the struggle continues, and the Alliance lives on for every indigenous person and every rubber tapper. This moves me because we fought a lot with the rubber tappers, when we thought anyone was an enemy. It was only later, with Chico Mendes and his people, that we saw that they were our allies, that they hadn't come to Acre to kill Indians as their bosses told us. Like us, they were also against deforestation and cattle ranching, which were destroying the forest. So we became friends, we made this alliance that will last forever, because we're on the same side.

"Today Chico is no longer here, but the struggle continues, and the Alliance lives on for every indigenous person and every rubber tapper."



Gabriel Uchida



ANTÔNIO APURINÃ



I'm Antônio Apurinã, co-founder of the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI) and co-founder of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. UNI was a strong institution politically, but without legal registration. We worked under the umbrella of the Indigenous Culture Center (NCI), founded by Ailton Krenak, in São Paulo. Legally, UNI was also just a fancy name, because until the 1988 Constitution, Indigenous Peoples didn't have the right to have their own organizations. Our main struggle was for the regularization of Indigenous Lands, because that was the time when, under the Sarney government, the Brazilian state tried to take us away from our Indigenous Lands and isolate us in colonies, without rights or freedom. In Acre, our struggle was the same, only a little more intense, because we were about to lose our lands to deforestation, caused by the "paulistas" to establishing extensive cattle ranching. It was because of these common threats that we started talking to the rubber tappers, through Chico Mendes and other leaders. We then came up with the idea of forming an Alliance to support the struggle of the Indigenous Peoples in defense of their original rights, and also to support the rubber

tappers in defense of the Extractivist Reserves. Working together, one could strengthen the other. The Alliance was one of the most beautiful things to happen in the Brazilian Social Movement. When Chico was alive, he always spoke of the importance of our Alliance. I remember one time when we held an indigenous assembly at the Acre Cultural Foundation, around 1987, and Chico, who had just come back from a trip abroad, told us that wherever he went, he had spoken about the Alliance. At that time, I was just starting out as a militant, with a lot of persecution from the dictatorship, but the strength of the Movement was very strong. The dictatorship was a horrible time, when we didn't have the freedom to express ourselves, with FUNAI controlling all our movements. Today it's something else: through the strength of the Alliance struggle and the movements, we have conquered this essential good called freedom. That's why, looking back, I see that the work of UNI and CNS was worthwhile, the dialogue to create the Alliance was worthwhile, this journey and this path were very worthwhile. I am living proof of how important this struggle was. I am happy to see that indigenous people are no longer treated like pets by FUNAI. But the government still needs to regularize the Indigenous Lands once and for all and do the same with all the rubber tapper reserves and all the other Extractivist communities in Brazil.

"Today, Indigenous Peoples suffer less prejudice, but there is still a long way to go for their voices to be heard when it comes to the Brazilian state making public policies that impact their lives."



ANTONIO MACÊDO

My name is Antonio Luiz Batista de Macêdo and I'm a fighter. I was born on the Bagaceira settlement, on the Transvalle rubber plantation, on the Muru River, in the municipality of Tarauacá. I grew up in the indigenous villages of Tarauacá. In the mid-1970s, I started working with the indigenous issue in Acre, first as an indigenist, then as a sertanista [person who works with the Brazilian sertão biome], and I'm still doing that today. I'd heard a lot about Chico Mendes, but I only met him in 1978. I was working in the Juruá Valley and he in the Acre Valley. That same year, 1978, Terri Aquino, Concita Maia, Dedé Maia and I created the Acre Pro-Indian Commission to organize the Indigenous Movement. In 1983, we tried to hold the first indigenous assembly in Acre, but we only managed to gather twelve leaders. It was a lot of work, because the leaders distrusted each other, still because of the disagreements of the past, the shaman wars, the race to escape the whites. There was resistance both from the indigenous people towards the rubber tappers and from the rubber tappers towards the indigenous people. At the second assembly, in 1984, we decided to invite Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak, to try to find a way to bring our struggles together, and then we managed to gather 80 leaders. We put it like this: "Chico, the indigenous people and the rubber tappers are different, yes, because the indigenous people are from a traditional society and the rubber tappers are from a secular society, but the difference ends there, because they both drink from the same waters in the same streams and are exploited by the same bosses, they are coerced by the same feudal system that still takes place on

"You know, Chico, everyone is fighting for land, to preserve their space in the forest, to protect the forest that guarantees our game and fish."



Antonio Macêdo

the rubber plantations. You know, Chico, everyone is fighting for land, everyone is fighting to preserve their space in the forest, to protect the forest that guarantees our game and our fish. On this side we are disunited, and on the other side there are the exploiters, who we all know who they are." Chico agreed very much with this conversation and came to our meeting. This union soon took shape in the region of Xapuri and Alto Juruá, where we created the regional CNS and the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. We only did what we did because we managed to establish a very long chain of friends. One day they took me to Rio de Janeiro to present an award to Paul McCartney – and I didn't even know who that was. I asked May Waddington why this Paul guy had to win an award instead of an Indian or a rubber tapper. May said to me: "Macêdo, you don't know who Paul McCartney is, you don't know what the Beatles are?" That's when I started learning. Today we know many more people in the world and everywhere we know how to defend the legacy of the struggle of Chico Mendes and all the leaders who were murdered, and I'm sure that, wherever they are, they are proud of what they did and what we continue to do in memory of each one of them.



BENKI ASHANINKA

LISTENING TO NATURE IS AN ACT OF LOVE
KNOWING HOW TO LISTEN TO SILENCE IS WISDOM
TO RHYME MY POETIC SONG IS TO SHOW MY LOVE.

I'VE BEEN HAPPY SINCE I WAS A CHILD
I'VE ALWAYS DREAMED OF A BETTER FUTURE
ANTONIO LUIZ DE MACÊDO,
TERRI AQUINO AND OTHER LEADERS
WHO BROUGHT THE FIGHT TO THE WORLD
WITH THEIR REAL STORIES.

THE AMAZON IS FULL OF MYTHS,
BUT THAT'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT
LISTENING TO THE BIRDS SINGING.

MYSTERIES AND MANY STORIES,
THE WHOLE FOREST IS SMILING
THE SINGING OF THE LEAVES
AND BROUGHT TO THE WORLD
WHERE IT CAME FROM
CHICO MENDES,
HERO OF THIS STORY,
THE MEMORY OF THAT HISTORY.

WITH THE HUM OF THE WIND
CARRYING THE SCENT OF FLOWERS,
WITH THAT, CHICO LEFT
THAT'S
LEAVING A VOICE
HAPPY AMAZON.

THE RAIN FALLS AND LIGHTLY
FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD TO REFLECT ON.

THE SUN DRIES IT, THE RIVERS GROW
AND THE FISH DANCE IN THE WATER,
THE AMAZON IS BIG,

BUT THE WORLD IS BIGGER,
THE FISHERMAN ARRIVES WITH JOY
MY HOUSE IS SO SMALL
IN THIS ATMOSPHERE OF ENDLESS HAPPINESS.

AND SO THAT'S ME
I ALSO WANT TO MULTIPLY THIS STORY
TAKING CARE OF MOTHER EARTH
AND THE FOREST WHERE I WAS BORN.

I MAKE A BOW, I HAVE AN ARROW
I WANT PROTECTION FROM THE WATERS
I HAVE THE ART OF WISDOM,
I DEFEND MY FOREST WITHOUT FEAR
WITH PEACE AND HARMONY.

WHICH IS PART OF THIS GLOBAL CYCLE.

CABOCLO, INDIAN, BLACK
HERE I END MY POEM
WITH THIS RECOMMENDATION:
EVERYONE DO WHAT I DO
IN DEFENSE OF THIS UNION,
WHERE SEVERAL LEADERS WERE BORN,
FORMING A WORLD WITH ONE HEART.

BENKI ASHANINKA



Benki Ashaninka



CHICO APURINÃ

I'm Chico Apurinã, from Aldeia São Francisco, in the Água Preta-Iñari Indigenous Land, in the municipality of Itauni, in Amazonas. I started in the Indigenous Movement in 1985, when I went to Rio Branco to study. In 1989, I started working in the Movement. I worked with Antônio Apurinã at UNI-Acre until 1994. A little earlier, I had already been working on the Peoples of the Forest Alliance with Chico Mendes and all the comrades. The Alliance came as a response to the invasion of Acre by other peoples who came from cultures that weren't ours and who arrived to clear the forest and put in cattle. It was very violent. We and the rubber tappers were seeing our traditional lands being occupied without any action being taken. The Alliance was created to join our efforts around our interests, which were the same. Ailton Krenak and Chico Mendes coordinated the formation of the Alliance. Even after Chico's death, in March 1989 we held the meeting they were preparing, the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest, because the Peoples of the Forest Alliance was the most important space we had. This was the way we found to communicate our messages to the outside world, because until then Brazilian law didn't allow the free expression of Indigenous Peoples. It was only with the 1988 Constitution, with all the struggle of the Indigenous Movement and civil society, that we began to have the right to organize. In 1989, COIAB was created. COIAB was born with the same purpose as the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI), to strengthen the struggle for the demarcation of Indigenous Lands, for better education and better health, and also for sustainable economic activities with respect for our values and our indigenous traditions. Coiab was created to work in the Amazon, but from the outset it was understood that it would work not only in the Amazon, but also with the rest of Brazil, so the Movement has expanded, making political alliances in the interests of Indigenous Peoples.



Funai

"We want to find the least traumatic way to include the demands of our Indigenous Peoples in these public policy spaces that are being built, without giving up our standing forest and the quality of life that respects the identity, cultural values and ancestral traditions of our Indigenous Peoples."





Acre 24 Horas



CIPASSÉ XAVANTE

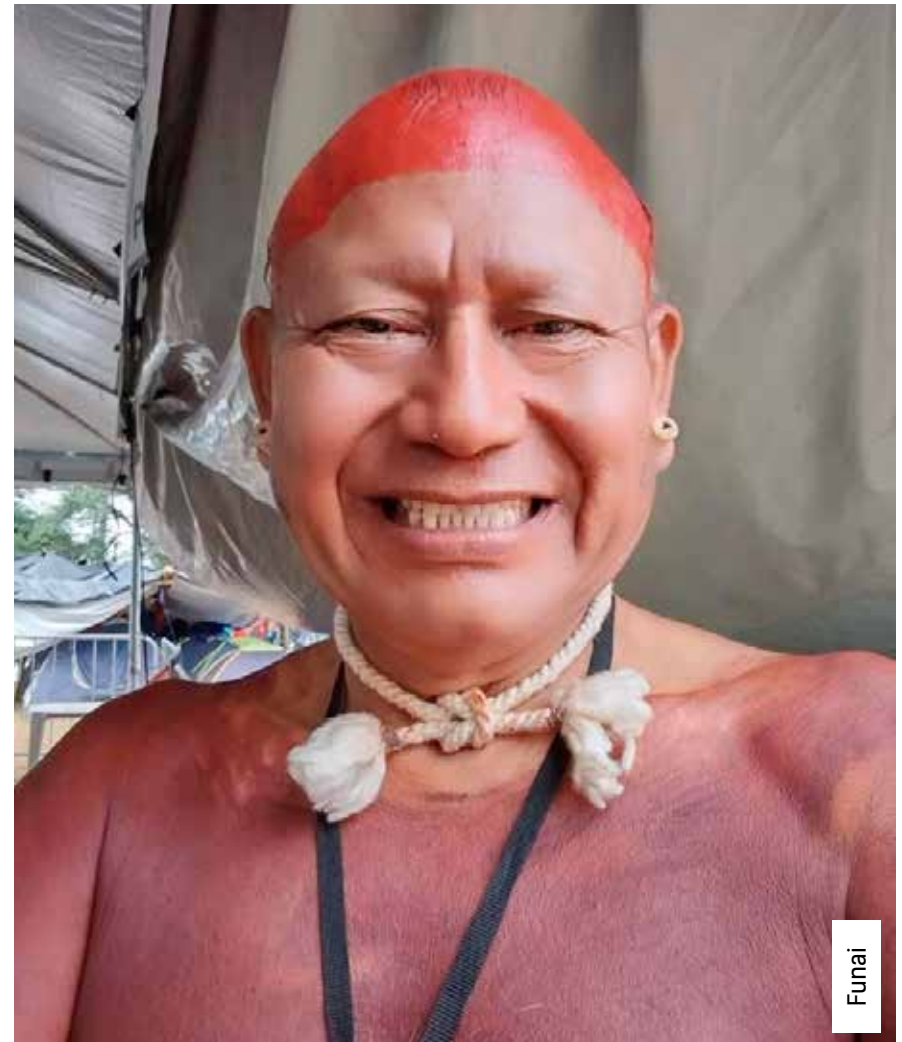
To my people I am Cipassé Xavante. In the white man's language, they added the name Paulo to my name, so I became Paulo Cipassé, of the Xavante ethnic group, and so I go through life. I'm chief of Aldeia Wederã, which means Jenipapo Village, located in the Pimentel Barbosa Indigenous Land, in the state of Mato Grosso. I've been in the Indigenous Movement since very early on, since the beginning, since I was an indigenous student in the 1970s–1980s. I came from Mato Grosso to study in Goiânia, because there was no school in my village, and after elementary school I continued in Goiânia. I was very young, 18 years old, when I started to get together with other students who were organizing the Indigenous Movement in Goiânia. It was during this time, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, that I met Ailton Krenak and various other leaders. At that time, Ailton was already playing the role of articulator and great thinker that he still fulfills today. There was a meeting of indigenous leaders in Goiânia and Ailton Krenak, Chief Raoni Metuktire and Marcos Terena came to the meeting. They were the vanguard of the movement. It was at this meeting, supported by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI) and the Ecumenical Center for Documentation and Information (CEDI), that I was given a subscription to the newspaper Porantim for a year, so that I could follow the affairs of the Indigenous Movement. When I was 19, I married an indigenous Karajá woman I met in Goiânia, Severiá Idiorê, and I soon joined the Movement elaborating projects for my Xavante people with her help. I thought it was time I left school to dedicate myself to my village's projects. So Wanderlei de Castro and I, who was a technician friend of Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak and very close to the indigenous people, set up the Jaburu Project, to reforest our Xavante area and, at the same time, work with the breeding and management of wild animals, so that there would be no shortage of game for my people. This project didn't come from my head. It came from the dream of one of our shamans, the Xavante shaman Sibupá. It was the shaman Sibupá who sent me to get help to make the proposal



Funai



and then we told Wanderlei de Castro about the dream. He then explained that, in order to see the dream come true, we needed to write a project. We drew up the project with Wanderlei and, with the help of Ailton Krenak, we went to find resources to raise wild animals and to reforest our area, planting lots of Cerrado fruit trees. Today, in short, I think this experience was very worthwhile. I still hear that our project was a pioneer in raising wild animals on Indigenous Lands, and that it inspired many other projects in many other communities, both indigenous and non-indigenous, all over Brazil. For us, the project was and still is very important in our village, because it brings knowledge and allows the young Xavante population to continue being hunters. Only now, we raise the game that the young people look for in the forest. But the way of life, the cultural heritage and the hunting ritual remain the same as they always have been among the Xavante. And this helps to maintain our tradition and our unity. From my village, I've continued to accompany and participate in the linking of rubber tappers with indigenous peoples, in order to unite the peoples of nature. Our first Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest, which was also the Second National Meeting of the Rubber Tappers, took place in Acre in 1989, after Chico was killed, but long before that we were already discussing and organizing this Peoples of the Forest Alliance, even here in Mato Grosso and Goiás, because we, the indigenous and rubber tappers, were fighting for the same things: the demarcation of the Indigenous Lands and the demarcation of the Rubber Tappers' Reserves. So, at the grassroots, from our villages, we started working to make this Alliance. Since at the time UNI represented it us, it was responsible for, through Ailton Krenak, sealing this union with Chico Mendes, on behalf of all of us, because they were the two great leaders of our struggle at that time.



"Today, Chico is no longer here, physically present, strengthening our union. But his legacy lives on and, luckily for us, Ailton Krenak is still alive, forming consciences."



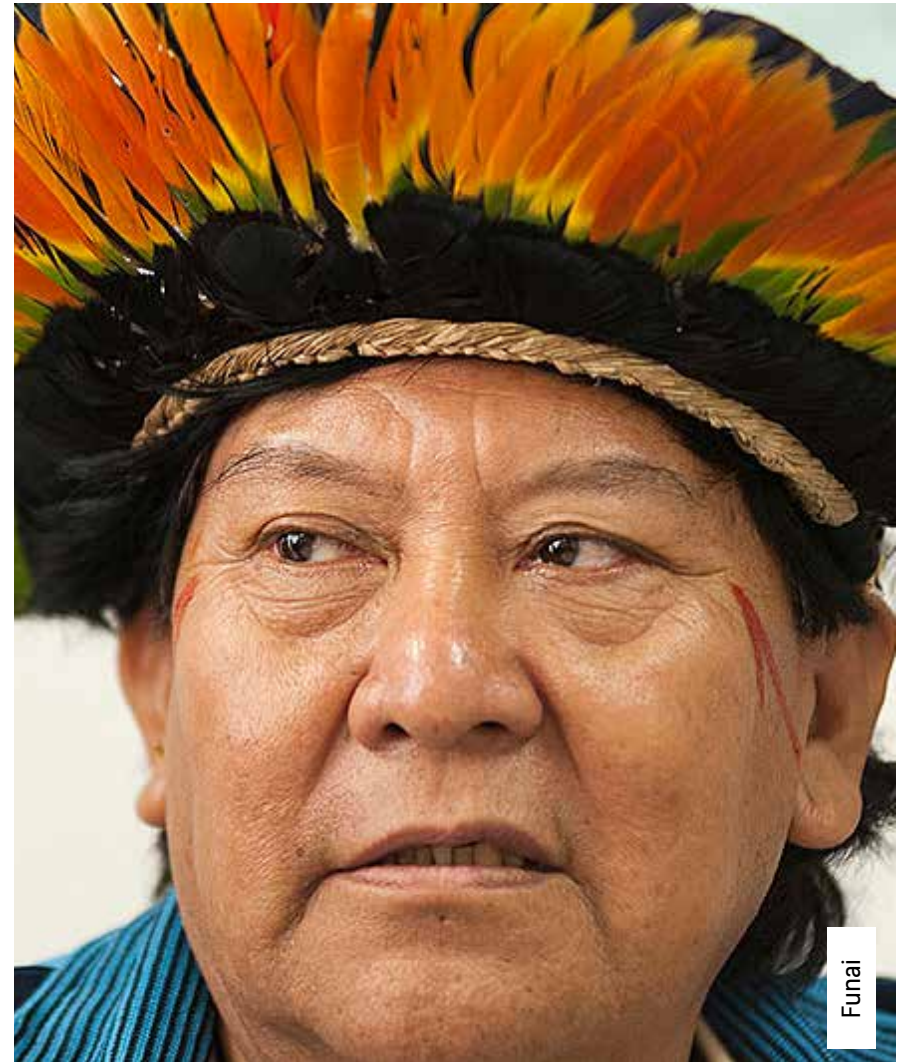
DAVI KOPENAWA YANOMAMI

I was happy to be found, in this place that is not so easy to find, to leave my testimony. I'm here at Hutukara, which was born out of a dream of mine. After everything we experienced, I went through some very dangerous periods. I had problems with the whites, with the miners on my land. At first, I was alone, fighting alone. Over time, I felt supported by a legion of Indian and non-Indian relatives and brothers. We were victorious in our struggle and managed to demarcate our Yanomami Land in 1992. Afterwards, I returned to my village, my maloca, and saw that our children couldn't speak or write Portuguese, couldn't use Portuguese to get around, and also had difficulties communicating in our own mother tongue. We had to dedicate a lot of time to strengthening our mother tongue and making our younger generation a generation committed to Yanomami culture. There was a time when we needed to give new direction and encouragement to our people, so we went to talk to the Norwegians and asked for support for our small projects. We wanted to set up schools in the village of Demini Watik. After the meeting with these leader friends and with the help of Marcos Terena, Ailton Krenak and Jorge Terena, who has since died, we started to create the school. I went with Ailton and other leaders and gained a lot of experience. I learned from them how to create an indigenous culture center and I began to take part in UNI. But there was a restlessness in me and I asked myself: why weren't the Yanomami taking part? We had to fight to plant our own thinking, our own tree, and so the Yanomami joined the Movement. We formed the Peoples of the Forest Alliance so that we could speak with one voice. To have a single voice. I never went to the rubber plantations, but I learned to respect the name and strength of the rubber tappers. And among the rubber tappers, there was a warrior, a fighter for the preservation of nature and the protection of the Amazon. I was Chico's comrade and I shared and [still] share his ideals. The Yanomami and the rubber tappers have the same ideals: to defend the forest, our people, our culture, our rights. Defending our health, our food. I knew Chico Mendes a little, I met him once, and then he was killed.

But he was replaced by many good comrades in the struggle, people who continue their fight and defend their dreams. Here too, among my people, many were killed by gold miners. We are saddened by the death of Chico Mendes and the deaths of my people, because they want to finish us off too. The whites are like the agouti, which steals our fields. We plant and the agouti steals. White people are like agoutis. Chico Mendes and I have won awards in recognition of our struggle. We met a lot of people here and abroad. The white world is very cruel to us indigenous people. We are very shocked, for example, by this case of wanting to re-discuss the mining law. This story is making us angry, really angry. They want to destroy the forest, my people and themselves, because it's not just the Yanomami who are going to die. When they finish off the forest, deforest everything, kill the trees and the birds, then the river, the land and what's good about nature, death will also come for the white people. What is not good for the indigenous people is not good for the white people. I've learned to fight, to defend my land and my people. Other relatives fight in their villages against the white men, always the same enemies. We keep fighting. A very important point is to dream so that you don't get sick or suffer. So, dreaming for the indigenous person is a different experience to that of the white man. Dreaming serves as a means of transporting messages to another world. These messages are for our world here, for the world in general, because our Earth is unique. The dream we receive is a message of unity and conservation, which is why we never throw bombs to kill others, we never deforest our land. Our forest is used with great care, it is not cut down to be traded, to make money out of it or to sell to foreigners. The foreigners have already wiped out their lands and are keeping an eye on ours. Chico and I were and are two dreamers. The dream teaches us to be smart. Don't let non-Indians get too close. The dream tells us: the dangerous ones are coming, the barbarians are coming; they come from far away, looking for our land. I sent a message with another shaman to all the indigenous people in Brazil; there are few shamans now.



The culture and religion of the non-pajés (non-Indians) is wiping out the shamans. The Yanomami are sending a message to everyone to be careful. The dangers are increasing, violence is on the rise. Hunger, pollution, lack of rain, the planet is getting too hot. The shaman sends these messages which, for our people, are called Xapori: from the sky, the forests, the moon, the sun, the river, the mountains. You need a shamanic ritual to be able to dream. We have learned to use the word spirit so that the white man can understand what the Xapori is. The white man can't understand the Xapori. This toucan color, this macaw color, this necklace is from the mountains, from the forest, is the dream we receive to preserve the beauty of the forests, the richness of our land. Wisdom, knowledge, is our greatest dream. In every thought, in every dream, Pata - our greatest forest leader, a superior being - teaches us. We are his children. We learn to dream, to have visions and dreams. Our dreaming is a form of direct contact with the shaman. The shaman sings and dances differently. All the peoples of the Earth are related. Only the skin is different. The human being is one. All hearts are the same; we are the heart of the Earth. One heart. One people. I have three names: David, the hero who defeated Goliath; Kopenawa, which means the one who fights to defend his people; and Yanomami, the one who first appeared on Earth. I chose my name myself. I defend my land and my people with my mouth and my voice; not with arrows, because I am not a criminal. I tell my enemies that they cannot enter my Land, because they don't have their navels buried in it. The Land is ours, that of our ancestors and our future generations.



"I was Chico's comrade and I shared and [still] share his ideals. I had a friend to fight alongside me and I lost that friend. I always remember Chico Mendes, because we fought and suffered together."



EDEL NAZARÉ MORAES TENÓRIO



Foto: Governo Federal

I am Edel Moraes, a daughter of the Marajó archipelago, located in the Amazonian state of Pará, and the first woman to become vice-president of the National Council of Extractivists (CNS). My story is that history of a collective struggle: I started with the Ecclesial Grassroots Communities (CEBs) of the Catholic Church where I learned, from early on, that faith and social justice should always walk together. There, I also learned that Education could be liberation. To study, I needed to do domestic work for families and live away from home. I faced inequality, yet I always dreamt of a new reality. I began my journey with the youth and adult literacy Mova Ajuri-Para program, inspired by the methodology of Paulo Freire. From there, I moved on to the union struggles and community participation in my territory. At CNS, I found a bigger cause to fight for. I supported communities with their sustainable development initiatives; I promoted the social engagement of youth and women; I created income alternatives, such as the production of açai by riverine families. I saw the families grow and their movement get stronger. In the year of 2011, with great honor and happiness, I became vice-president of CNS, nominated by my Marajó community. This task was never only mine. It belongs to my community, to the youth and women of the forest, to the riverine families which I represent. Since then, I acted on strategic public policies, such as the CONAREDD+, Law 13.123/2015, the creation of Sanear Amazônia, which secured potable water and dignity to the communities, and also the building of the Planafe. I participated in the creation of Sustainable Development Reserve (RDS) outside of the Amazon Rainforest as well as in the Project "I am a Woman and I participate", which assured my commitment to gender equality and Community strengthening. I took the voice of my Marajó people and of the extractivist communities of the Rainforest to national and international meetings and conferences, from the Chamado da Floresta to the Marcha das Margaridas; to debates at the UN in New York to meetings on climate justice in Germany. I also wrote many articles published in several national and



international journals and magazines. In them, I always defended the traditional knowledge of my people, which is fundamental for the enhancement of science and for the preservation of life itself. Throughout my life, uniting academic achievements with social struggles is not a coincidence; rather, it is a conscious strategy which strengthens my voice and legitimize our proposals. My academic work has never been abstract. On the contrary, it has always been a direct investigation of the my living with the peoples do forest, the heirs o Chico Mendes. This synergy allows me to share the wisdom of my Community in a language that others can better understand and respect. This is the way I have chosen to honor Chico Mendes, hero of Brazil, and all the other innumerable anonymous forest leaders who thought me to love the wonders of the Amazon Rainforest.

“It is not about the Forest only: It is also about Territory, Politics and Women.”



Divulgação



IVANEIDE BANDEIRA CARDOZO

NEIDINHA

I'm Neidinha, an environmentalist from Plácido de Castro in Acre, but from Rondonia at heart. I grew up in the middle of the forest, in a town called Rio Táxi, near the limits of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau Indigenous Land, in the state of Rondônia. My father was a rubber tapper, my mother was a rubber tapper and we lived in the forest all the time. As a child, my toys were paca, agouti, toucan, curassow and other animals. To leave home, we would walk 60 days in the woods, because there was no road, nothing. When I was 12, I came to the city to study. I went to a public school, where I learned to do theater, which I now use as an instrument of denunciation. I also paint and write poetry, all about the Amazon. My poetry is full of suffering. When they're burning down the forest in my state, I write sad things, because it's a very strong impact and a lot of pain. I went to university and graduated in History. In 1984, I started working as a volunteer, distributing leaflets on indigenous issues. At that time, there were no NGOs and we did the work together with people from CIMI. I went to São Paulo to do a master's degree at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). In 1987, I came back to work on my thesis on the defense of the forest and the Indigenous Peoples and I joined the fight once and for all, abandoning my master's degree, because here I have my soul, my heart, my whole body and my viewpoint as a researcher, as someone who loves the forest and its people. It was the time of PoloNoroeste. Many Indians had just been contacted and FUNAI used to take them to the administration office, which was in front of my house. One day, the Paiter shaman (Surui from Rondônia), Perpera, on his first visit to Porto Velho, went to take a shower and the water was very hot, because my father had just put an electric shower in my house. The shaman went into the bathroom and started shouting that the water was hot.

He got nervous and almost burned himself, because he didn't understand the process of heating water with electricity. From that day on, I also began to accompany the Paiter (Surui). I was already accompanying the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, whom I had contacted in 1981. Working at FUNAI, I was the first female chief in the Rondônia post. Together with other employees, we saw a FUNAI chief encouraging indigenous people to sell wood. We denounced him and we were all dismissed. As well as being sacked, we were banned from entering the area, forced to stay away from the people we loved and tried to protect. But that didn't stop our fight: we began to monitor the surroundings of the Indigenous Land. As a way out, in 1992 we created an NGO, Kanindé - Ethno-environmental Defense Association, with the mission of defending the Indigenous Peoples and the forest, to put our ideals into practice. With no money, hitchhiking or on foot, we walked kilometers and kilometers, inspected, recorded and reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office. The WWF people liked our work and told us to formalize a request for support. All we asked for was a vehicle and fuel to protect the area. With this vehicle, we carried out countless operations together with the indigenous people, because the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau have always been very combative in defending their land. We were threatened with death; every illegal logger wanted to kill us. And the WWF, who got to know our work, asked for another project. This time, we told them that protection was of no use, that it wasn't enough to keep the forest standing if the indigenous people inside had no way of surviving. We explained that, with contact, they had been introduced to other customs, that they wanted other consumer goods, such as clothes and farming tools, because this had become part of their lives. It wasn't enough to preserve: we had to promote conservation



and sustainable development. We approved a new proposal. We carried out protection, supported traditional agriculture and also helped the indigenous people with monitoring. In 1996, I was the first woman in Rondônia to work with isolated indigenous people, after much struggle to convince the men at FUNAI that women were also capable of doing this. They were very macho. We spent months in the forest, surveying the area of indigenous occupation in order to request the protection and demarcation of their lands. Since then, our life has been

about filing complaints, defending human rights and seeking partnerships, because we've learned that without partnerships we can't move forward, because we know that the struggle will be long and that if the destruction of the forest in Rondônia isn't stopped, Amazonas and Acre will also be destroyed. The example of Chico Mendes, Ailton Krenak and so many other comrades who made up the Peoples of the Forest Alliance inspires us and gives us the strength to continue fighting for better days for the Peoples of the Forest.

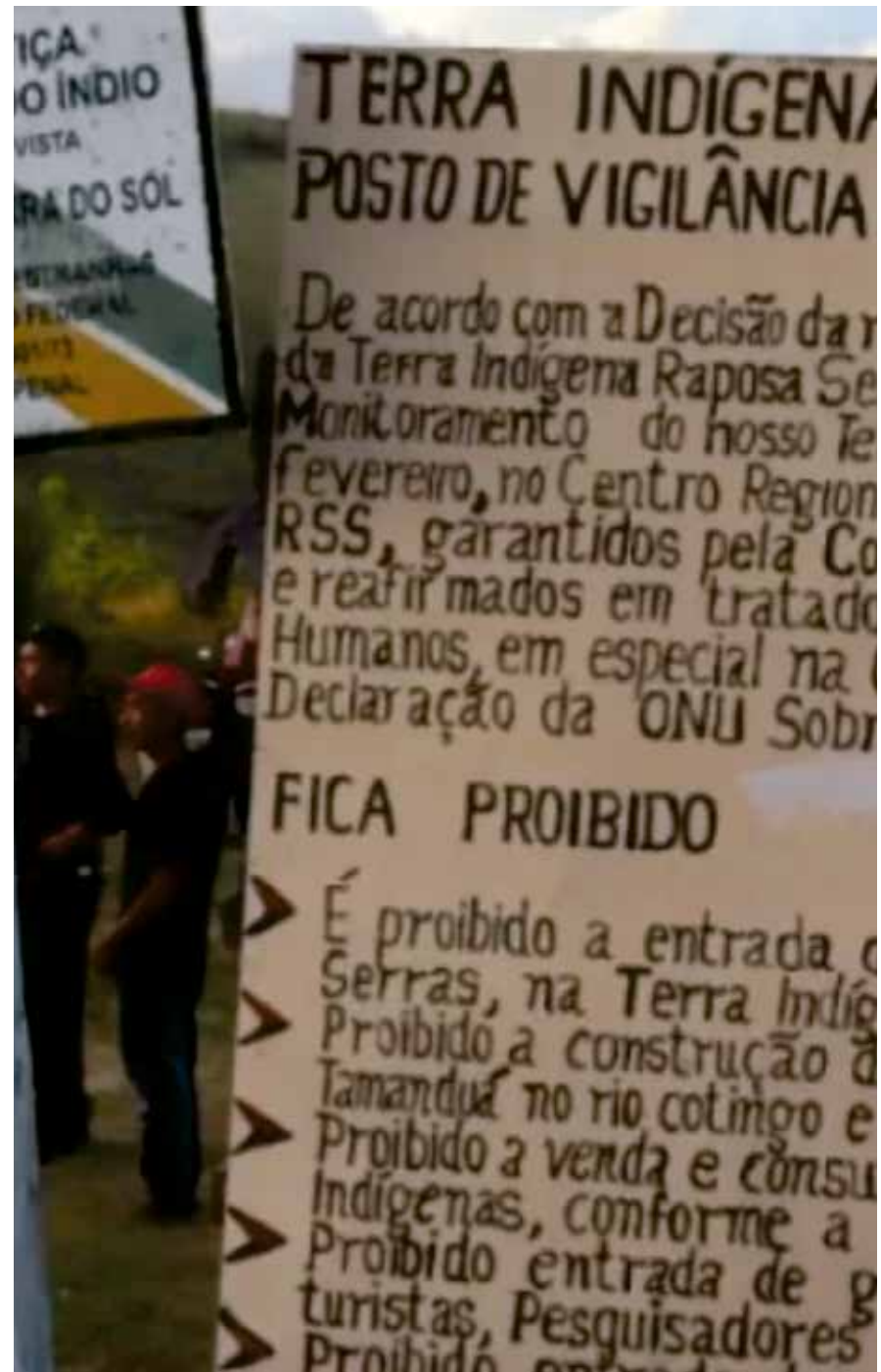
"What's left of the forest in Rondônia today are the Conservation Units and Indigenous Lands. What was outside these areas has already been destroyed."

Conexão Planeta/Kanindé



JACIR MACUXI

My registered name is Jacir José de Souza. I am Macuxi indigenous, born in the Maturuca village. I grew up in a community called Lilás, which has a school for the people of the region to study. I didn't study, my brothers did, I didn't want to. I only learned to read and write later, at Mobral, when I already had a wife. So I have no formal education, but I have a lot of knowledge about life. I'm married. I have 19 children. I spent a few months in the mines and then worked with the whites, but I saw that I needed to work with the community. I decided this on April 26, 1977, when we held a meeting in the community, because there was a lot of alcoholism, a lot of drinking. They asked me why I wasn't taking on the leadership of the maloca, and I replied that I didn't really understand what it meant to be a tuxaua [chief], that I was too young. I don't know what happened that day, nobody went out even to drink water. Everyone kept asking the same question: how were we going to stop the drinking? Why was everyone drinking, the men, the women? Were they all sick? I didn't know how to answer. Shortly afterwards we had another meeting, with everyone and even children, and everyone was shouting: "You, you!" My community wanted me to be the leader, I agreed to try it for two years and I stayed. As a tuxaua, I was only able to leave after eight years. As I was very young, I also called in the councillors and stayed in both positions, as tuxaua and councillor. As a tuxaua, I stayed in the village and, as a councillor, I went around the communities. There were a lot of problems with miners and ranchers, a lot of invasions of our land. It became very complicated for us. In my first year as tuxaua I banned cachaça [sugarcane liquor] from entering the village. I allowed our traditional drink, caxiri, but with control. The elders were surprised, because I used to drink it too. I started buying animals, like sheep and cattle, for the community. And our people started going back to the fields and doing collective work. We began to think that we needed an organization to defend our struggle, but at first people were afraid that an organization could wipe out the tuxauas. It took



four years before the communities agreed. We held a big assembly to found the Indigenous Council of Roraima, the CIR. At the end of 1989, a meeting in Manaus decided to create COIAB, where I joined as vice-president and ended up as coordinator. The following year my wife died and I had to return to my village to take better care of my children. The whole village offered to help look after them. Then I got sick, left and then came back. Before, I worked a lot without getting sick. I think my health was affected more by my worries, especially with this long process of the Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Land. This area is home to several indigenous peoples – Macuxi, Wapichana, Ingaricó, Taurepang and Patamona, with a population of 19,000 inhabitants spread over 194 villages. Compared to the situation in 1977, today we have made progress on the land issue. When they hadn't yet been demarcated, before 1992, we had to compensate miners on our own for leaving the area. And it cost a lot to raise the money. Raposa Serra do Sol turned out to be our most difficult struggle, some stages have already been reached, but there is still a lot to do. The most difficult thing for us has been facing the rice farmers, because they come with a lot of money and a lot of violence, burning down the Indians' houses and beating up our relatives. On the other hand, the most beautiful thing is to see people from other places defending Raposa Serra do Sol, which has become a symbol of the indigenous struggle in Brazil and around the world. The role of leadership demands a lot of us. This task is for those with courage and commitment. When we travel, we have to worry about the communities, everything has to be in order, such as a place to stay and food, because nobody gives money. Every activist travels like this. It must have been the same with Chico Mendes. There's one good thing: we exchange a lot of ideas and get a lot of support. And when we go somewhere, there's always someone to support us, like with the Amanaka'a people in New York in the 1990s.



Funai

"A fight never ends. There's always a lot left to do for those who come after us. I hope that our example, together with the legacy of Chico Mendes, will always serve as an inspiration for our youth."



JECINALDO SATERÊ-MAWÉ

I'm Jecinaldo Saterê-Mawé. My name in the language of my people is Ìñap-Açaí, and my clan is Kaba-Vespa. I was born in the Andirá-Amaral Indigenous Land, which is in the Lower Amazon. When I was 12, I went through a ritual to become an adult. It went like this: my uncles made a straw glove; they searched the woods for dozens of tucandeira ants, an ant with a very painful sting; they put the ants to sleep in cashew leaf water and, when they were asleep, they put them one by one into the glove, with the stinger inside. Then I put my hand inside the glove and endured it for twelve hours. At the end of my ritual, I had left childhood behind. During those 12 hours of pain, the elders taught me many things, lessons on how to fight for our identity, how to defend our territory. Me, feeling that terrible pain, and the elder talking, talking. His words became engraved in my head. When I was 15, I left my village to study in Barreirinha, and then in Parintins, a municipality close to my indigenous territory. Then I went to Manaus to study Pedagogy. I managed to finish Pedagogy, but my dream was to study Law, to defend my people under the law. I came back to be a teacher for the children of my people. When I returned, I began a new phase in my village, helping to organize indigenous teachers. We created the Saterê-Mawé Indigenous Teachers' Association, whose greatest achievement is the educational meetings between teachers and the children's parents, discussing together how, through education, we can improve the lives of our people. After that, the leaders of the Lower Amazon nominated me to represent indigenous teachers on the State Council for Indigenous Education in the state of Amazonas. I was subsequently elected president of the Council, and this expanded my work throughout the state. With me as president, for the first time we started holding itinerant meetings, going to where our people were, to the grassroots, to where our problems were. I wanted the government to take a closer look at the real needs of the Indigenous Peoples of Amazonas. Soon afterwards, the State Foundation for the Indigenous Peoples of Amazonas (Fepiam) was created. I helped set up this foundation. After this

work, my relatives nominated me for the Coordination of Coiab, an institution that brings together 165 Indigenous Peoples. Today I am at the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples, helping to strengthen the achievements of Indigenous Peoples in the Lula government and on the global stage, as Chico Mendes, Ailton Krenak and all the leaders who created and left us the legacy of the Peoples of the Forest did in the past.

"In 2008, during the Chico Mendes Week, we launched our book Voices from the Forest, the first historical record made by ourselves in memory of Chico Mendes."



Vozes da Floresta



JOAQUIM CORREA DE SOUZA BELO

"The Movement took Acre in other directions." This was Chico's vision and it was because of this idea that I ended up in an organization that defends the forest. I continue with Chico's vision of expanding the achievements of the Peoples of the Amazon by building alliances. Transforming each forest people into a strong link, with each link being an important part of that chain. With the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, we have achieved part of this. Today, our challenge is more complex. In the past, the Alliance focused on resisting the conquest of territories. Many rights have been won, much legislation has been improved. I see that the Alliance has been a very important tool for articulation, for strengthening our capacity to organize, to articulate precisely in order to overcome the challenges we face. The scope of the Alliance's role is now much greater. We need to dedicate ourselves even more to the issue of defending our rights. We are living through a crisis, the result of a violation of rights, which is the issue of climate change. An important achievement was the creation of our Conservation Units and the definition of our territories, which grew a lot during the Lula governments. This is not something we can disregard. However, our Movement has been somewhat stagnant. We've had bureaucratic difficulties in execution, in politics, in advancing the role of leadership. A different strategy that we've been focusing on recently and that has been working is called Escola Família [Family School]. We already have a considerable group of young people who are very involved in public policy. It's a school model that isn't just concerned with the academic side of things, but also with the citizen, with this more social side. A school that has spaces set aside in the curriculum to discuss social issues. In such a school, there is time to cover the content and time to discuss the community's problems. We need to think about training staff to replace current leaders in the future. In Amapá, we already have several schools linked to the theme of agrobiodiversity and the idea is that this catches on and we can build schools like this, with this mentality, all over the Amazon, all over Brazil. We have to

bring technology into the community, invest in communication and new technologies. Only in this way will we be able to attract young people to the struggle and keep our youth in our communities. I'll always be in this Movement, because there's no way we can disconnect from it. I have commitment and passion for the Movement. I can't leave.

"If you look at the map of Brazil today, you'll see many areas of Extractivist Reserves, Indigenous Lands, Extractivist settlements, Incra collectives. This is a legacy that we owe a lot to Chico Mendes."



JOCI AGUIAR

I'm Joci Aguiar, from the municipality of Feijó in Acre. I began my activism in the Social Movement in 1993, as secretary of the Feijó Rural Workers' Union. Soon after, I went to study at UFAC in Rio Branco and worked at CUT-Acre, which at the time was chaired by comrade Sibá Machado. Then I went to work at Fetacre. In 2000, I became executive secretary of the GTA Network. One of my first tasks as secretary was to arrange a meeting between the GTA Network and the World Bank representative, the late Ricardo Tarifa. I learned and grew with each step. Being part of the GTA Network gives me great pride, because we believe in Chico Mendes' dream, that it is possible to develop without harming nature, with appreciation and respect for people; preserving the knowledge and cultural values of the Peoples of the Forest; and seeking sustainable production alternatives that generate income for families and communities living in the Amazon. I didn't know Chico Mendes, but I know and share his dreams and ideals. If he were still alive, I think he would be happy to see that many of his proposals have been transformed into public policies by our leaders, elected with the strength of the people, as is the case with President Lula, elected President of the Republic three times. Chico Mendes taught us to be simple, humble and to listen to people. The bullet that silenced him forever also gave many of us the will to fight and defend the forest, and gave rise to other movements, such as the Women's Movement. Acre was a state in which the Women's Movement grew a lot. We are the first state in the Amazon to have a woman rubber tapper as a Minister of the State, Marina Silva, today our Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Our women are now strong protagonists in the development project for the Amazon region. We are occupying more and more spaces, implementing gender mainstreaming in public policies. This is also the legacy of our comrades from Acre, examples in the struggle they waged together with Chico Mendes.



"Chico Mendes' dream is coming true, thanks to the example of struggle and the legacy of resistance that he left us."



KLEBER KARIPUNA

My registered name is Kleber Gonçalves dos Santos, I'm from the Santos family, of the Karipuna people, from the Oiapoque region, in the north of the state of Amapá. I left my village of Santa Isabel very early to study in the city. My mother, Vitória Karipuna, a Funai employee at the time, was transferred to Belém and brought her children with her. I must have been about four years old. We spent a long time in Belém, unable to return to the village. I ended up losing the ability to speak my own language. I understand everything, but I still can't speak it and I'm very sad about that. On the other hand, life in Belém gave me the opportunity to study and train to help the Indigenous Peoples. I went back to Oiapoque and later returned to Pará to attend the Agrotechnical School in Castanhal, where I graduated in 1998. It was with this training that I returned to Oiapoque and started working with the Indigenous Movement. I started working for the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Oiapoque (APIO) at the end of 1998. In 2000, I left to serve in the army, which, in my region, recruits young indigenous people to protect national sovereignty. I stayed until 2003, but I was always sure that I wanted to work for the Movement. When I returned to the Movement, I started taking part in events outside Amapá. I was then invited to take part in the First Permanent Forum of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, promoted by Coiab, in October 2003. I had great difficulty speaking in public. Then came the training course promoted by PDPI and Coiab. This training course was a leap forward for my experience within the Movement. I was able to interact more closely with other Peoples: there were 32 indigenous leaders from various parts of the Amazon. We began to compare the difficulties faced by other peoples with those of our region: our struggle is for the quality of life of Indigenous Peoples, without losing sight of respect for our identity, our traditions and our cultural values. When I came back from that course, the people elected me President of APIO, the largest indigenous association in

Amapá and one of the oldest in our region. Created in 1992, APIO was born after the 1988 Constitution and Eco-92, to defend the achievements of Indigenous Peoples. I started working to help restructure Coiab. This experience gave me the skills to help our mother organization, which is what we call Coiab. Today I coordinate the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (Apib) at a national level and, from Apib, I reiterate the importance of remaining united in the defense of the Peoples of the Forest



"I feel that we are ready to build on the work that Chico Mendes, for the rubber tappers, and Ailton Krenak, for the indigenous people, began in the 1980s, which was to create and strengthen our Peoples of the Forest Alliance."



MARCOS TERENA

I'm Marcos Terena, an indigenous man from Mato Grosso do Sul, in the Pantanal region. I'm the president of an indigenous organization, the Intertribal Committee, and I'm also an airline pilot for FUNAI. I was one of the founders of the first Brazilian Indigenous Movement, the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI), together with Ailton Krenak, in 1977. We began as a front of indigenous students to overcome the tutelage and prejudice against Indigenous Peoples. We wanted to make Brazil recognize and respect the existence of the more than 180,000 indigenous people who lived in our country. Thanks to this work, we have a diagnosis that, today, Brazil has a population of more than 1,693,535 indigenous people, 0.8% of the Brazilian population, according to data from the Federal Government in 2023. In order to raise awareness in Brazilian society, we made strategic alliances with some journalists, with leaders of other movements and with other people. At that time, the country didn't yet have this widespread idea of fighting for ecology, but we already saw the fight for Indigenous Land as a way of preserving culture, maintaining peace and conserving forests, rivers and nature, so it was an ecological fight, an environmental fight. At the same time, there was a movement of people from the forest, especially from the Amazon rainforest, such as the rubber tappers of Acre, who, like us indigenous people, were suffering the same kind of impact as the colonizing invasions of their lands, only with a more serious situation because it was slave labor, people who didn't have their human rights recognized, and who handed over the fruits of their labor to the rubber bosses. This was a situation that became known to public opinion through the struggle of Chico Mendes, from the Rural Workers' Unions of Brasília and Xapuri, in the far west of Acre state. Although in the past the rubber tappers, as well as the peasants and river dwellers, had positioned themselves as enemies of the Indigenous Peoples, we felt the need to establish a common platform for struggle, all working with common priorities, starting with the demarcation of the Indigenous Lands and Extractivist Reserves, proposed by

the rubber tappers with a kind of Agrarian Reform for the Amazon, at the First National Meeting of the Rubber Tappers, held by them in Brasília in 1985. From then on, the leaders of the indigenous peoples, such as Ailton Krenak, and the rubber tappers, such as Chico Mendes, concluded that it was important to create the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. Our main interlocutor was Ailton, a Krenak indigenous leader, who began to lead this articulation together with Chico Mendes. Sometimes people ask me about the contract that sealed the Alliance between indigenous people and rubber tappers. I always reply that there was never a legal contract because the strongest alliances of the Indigenous Peoples were never recorded on paper, they were always political agreements, based on specific objectives, common struggle banners and the honor and word committed by our leaders and honored by all of us. In the case of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, our agreement included respect for the diversity of struggles and the identity of peoples, always seeking the human rights of all Forest Peoples. At that time, there was no environmental law. There was only the forest, considered by the government to be a land without an owner, "a land without people", in order to "Integrate so as not to Deliver", according to the dictatorship's slogans. The military government decided to colonize, taking thousands of families from the south of Brazil to create new settlements and cities in the Amazon region. This was not good for the Amazon, and even less so for the migrants, who came from a different background and were not used to living in the middle of the forest. Many of them died from tropical diseases, such as malaria, and a large part of the forest was cut down as a result of this inappropriate development model, which created large landowning blocks, with incentives from the federal government. This didn't happen on the Indigenous Lands because they were still obscure, nobody knew exactly what an indigenous land was, which was a positive point of our struggle: we showed that indigenous land can't just be a plot, a farm, a piece of land, or an agricultural colony. We defended – and won – the concept that Indigenous Land is for the traditional



use of the area, including enough space for wandering, for alternating village sites, as is the indigenous tradition. We are living through the 35th anniversary of the murder of Chico Mendes, who dedicated himself to the struggle of the Indians and rubber tappers, who fought and won many victories together throughout this process. To give you an idea, until the early 1980s, the government didn't recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples in Acre. Thanks to the work of indigenous leaders like Siã Kaxinawá and sertanistas like Antonio Macêdo, people who were persecuted and almost murdered at the time, those of us who live further south in Brazil have come to know about the existence of Indigenous Peoples who are well established in Acre, many of whom are still across borders, like the Kampa, who the whites call the Ashaninka; and also the Manchineri people, who have a Peruvian branch. The Peoples of the Forest Alliance has also brought the reality of political representation. There's Marina Silva as a figure who represents the consciousness that we call ecological, and which was born there with Chico Mendes, Ailton Krenak and other people. This awareness must not lose its roots, because the ecological issue, the Alliance itself, exists now more than ever, informally. The issue of climate change demands that this Alliance be taken up again before the world, so that we can find a balance between the environment, the economy, development and quality of life. Finally, I want to say how important it is that these stories of ours are recorded, because we are good at fighting and terrible at keeping records. It's important to record that the Indigenous Peoples and the rubber tappers, through the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, show us the importance of not only seeing the green carpet of the forest, but also seeing the people who live in the Amazon and survive off the resources of nature.



Vozes da Floresta

"The creation of a Brazilian policy with deeper ecological and social nuances comes as a response to the international visibility acquired by Chico Mendes and the Peoples of the Forest Alliance."



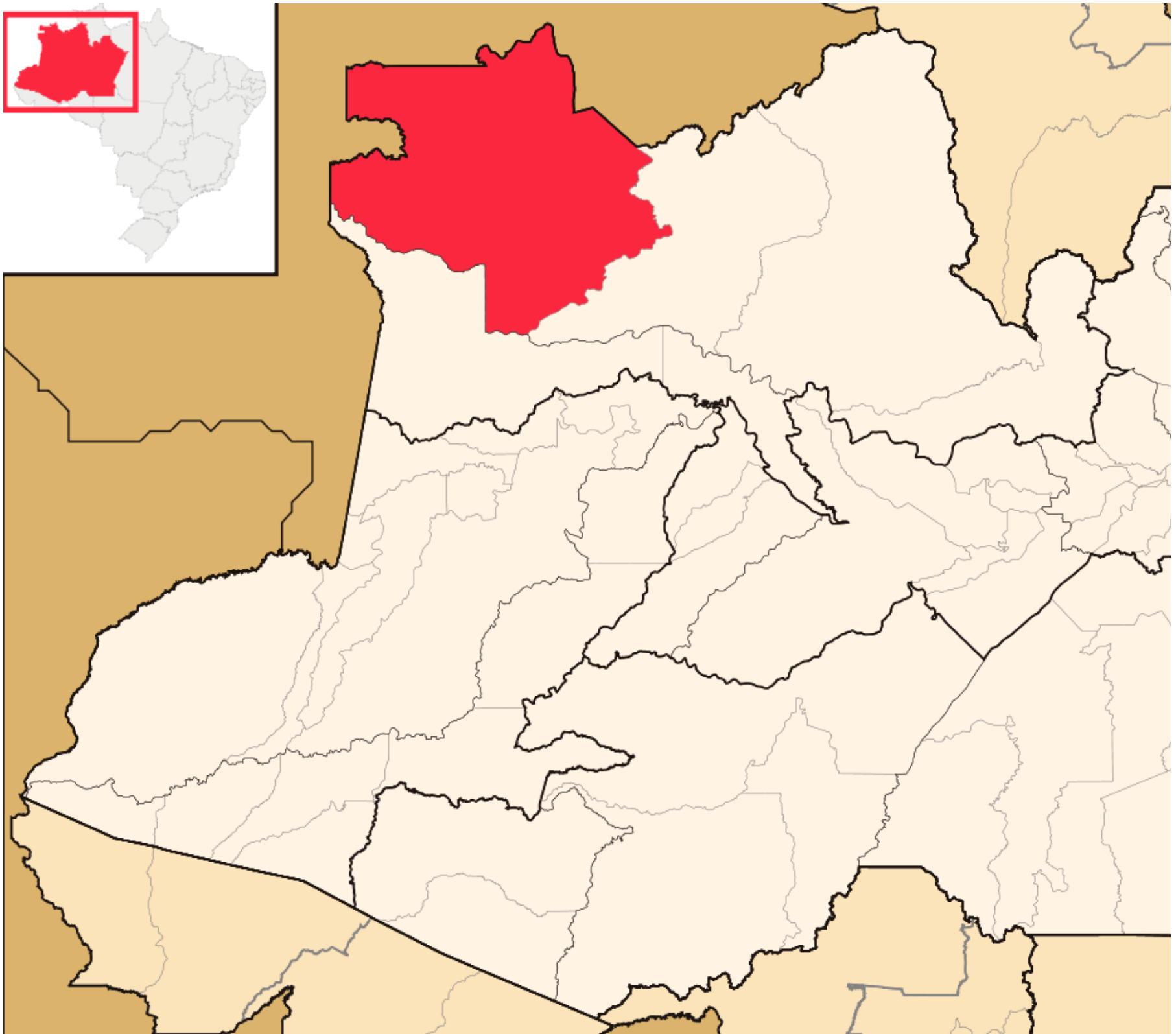
MIQUELINA TUKANO



"I learned about Chico Mendes at COIAB. I learned that he attached great importance to nature because, just like for us indigenous people, it was where he lived, where he worked and where he got his family's livelihood."

I arrived in Manaus more than 45 years ago. I came for the treatment of a son, and I stayed. I'm from the region of the Upper Rio Negro called Cabeça de Cachorro, an area called the Tukano Triangle, because there the Tukano predominate in a harmonious relationship of kinship, peace and love. I learned about Chico Mendes by seeing a poster for the Chico Mendes Prize at Coiab. I learned that Chico Mendes was a friend of the Indians, that he understood that his struggle was the same as ours and, like us, he was very much in favor of demarcating the Indigenous Lands. I also learned that, just as we suffered here, the rubber tappers and the Indians suffered in Acre. But both here and in Acre, we said that we were born on this land and that no one was going to be able to take it away from us. So much so that our area is still demarcated with those old markers. In this Movement, we get to know a lot, many different realities, we get to know other states and countries. With all this new knowledge, I see that what really strengthens us is our cultural identity. With or without government support, we are the ones who will take care of our area, our culture, our people and our struggle. And today I think that Coiab needs to be better qualified to show more of the results of its work. Now, it's no longer enough for Coiab to discuss demarcating land, which has come a long way. Now, we at Coiab have to advocate for them to conserve and sustain their land, working to support their own communities. We can't depend on the government. It has never worked for us to depend on the government. Today, Coiab also needs to address the climate issue, which is a big reflection of our time. My grandfather, who was a shaman, had his rituals. His preparation involved total abstinence and an oath to attend to everyone whenever he was called, rain, shine, day, night or wind. When I got married, I was afraid of him, because I married a Tukano, but from another group. But he said: "My granddaughter, we are from the past, you are different, from now on you will have other rules, to face these problems with more joy."





PAULO MENDES TIKUNA

I was born in São Paulo de Olivença and I live in the village of Umariáçu, in the municipality of Tabatinga, on the border between Brazil and Colombia. My struggle began in 1978, when I discovered a document at the FUNAI post that spoke of a resource for the Umariáçu community that nobody had told us about. We discovered this document and then I spoke to the chieftan Felipe, now deceased, who said that we knew about the resources. So I, Pedro Inácio, chieftain Venceslau and André, the Campo Alegre chieftain, in the municipality of São Paulo de Olivença, decided that if the resources were ours, we had to do something to take part in the project. In 1978, I traveled to the Lower Amazon, met the Saterê-Mawé and the Tukano, and they told me that they were fighting for the land, that, as indigenous people, they were fighting for the demarcation of their land. Until then, we in the Upper Solimões knew nothing about indigenous rights or land demarcation. I've spent more than half my life in this struggle, a struggle that works for us because it comes from our awareness, our discipline and our organization. We organized ourselves to resolve the conflict and the lack of respect for our rights. After traveling to the SaterêMawé, I went to São Paulo, to the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). It was on this trip that I met comrade Lula, and I was there when he was arrested. After seeing the strength of that Movement, after feeling the energy of those people who were there supporting comrade Lula, I came back here and together with the comrades here, I founded the General Council of the Tikuna Tribes (CGTT), and then smaller organizations to take care of health and education.

"One thing that needs to be done here in our region is to invest a lot in the education and awareness of our indigenous youth, because only this way will the Amazon have a chance of being defended for many generations after ours."

These organizations helped structure our struggle and are still active today. I traveled a lot to Brasília, and at the time I even spoke to the Minister of Health to take the Movement's proposal to him. At that time, we began to receive advice from FUNAI in the struggle to demarcate our lands, which we fortunately achieved in 1986. We learned the meaning of the struggle. In 1986 I said back in Paraná do Ribeiro, where we founded the CGTT, that one day we would have representatives in the municipalities, in the state and even in the federal government, but for that to happen we would have to also be militants within the political parties,

because they are the ones who choose the candidates and there is no way of being an elected representative without going through a political party. We chose the Workers' Party (PT) because it was the party that talked about indigenous rights, that said indigenous people had the right to health and education, that defended workers. We chose the PT because the Party's program said that it was a party that was born to defend the excluded, and we lived the meaning of the word

exclusion in the flesh. The PT said that the time had come for us to organize, that it was born to defend those who had no place and no voice. We thought it was the right party for our cause, and that's why we joined the PT as a bloc. And we fought hard in that party, fighting to win mandates, having a victory here and there, until in 2002 we elected comrade Lula President of the Republic. Then Lula was re-elected, with the votes of the Brazilian people and the hard work of our activists in the communities. We created Coiab to facilitate our interlocution with the outside world, to speak a single language for all the



Indigenous Peoples of the Amazon, because we know that when we unite, achievements come stronger and faster. It was a group of courageous leaders, including Manoel Mura, Álvaro Tukano, Pedro Mendes, Euclides Macuxi, who had the courage to found Coiab, because Funai didn't want it, the government didn't think it was necessary. That was in 1989, a year after Chico Mendes died. The first coordinators were Pedro Mendes, Claudio Mura and Euclides Macuxi. Coiab then went through several coordinators and today [2008] is under the leadership of Jecinaldo Saterê-Mawé, a fellow indigenous from the Lower Amazon. We have a lot of respect for Coiab, because it organizes dialogue among all the Indigenous Peoples and also with partners, but we continue to strengthen our grassroots organizations, because they are the ones who carry out the struggle on a daily basis, and they are the ones who are able to provide political backing for Coiab's struggle. After all, the indigenous struggle is and always has been for a better life for our communities, but a better life that respects our areas and the cultural values of our peoples. We think it's important to start reflecting and taking a stand on issues that were not previously part of our knowledge, such as the environment. In the past, we Indigenous Peoples took care of the forest as if it were part of ourselves. We never destroyed it, it was the non-indigenous people who came into our areas and our lives with this thing about cutting down trees to make money. Today, for example, our area is heavily exploited; every year non-indigenous people come to my village wanting to buy trees to make boards. And many of our relatives, who are not yet aware of the damage this causes, end up cutting down trees in the forest to sell to loggers. It's no use just educating in the schools we have today, we have to work hard to train indigenous leaders to continue the struggle. I'm very proud to be part of this struggle and I'm going to keep fighting to correct what isn't working in our community, to strengthen the cause of the Indigenous Peoples even more, because this is my cause.



ROSILENE GREGÓRIO

ROSINHA

I'm Rosinha, a coconut breaker from the municipality of Viana, in Maranhão. I had been helping my mother break coconuts since I was seven years old. In 1989, I took part in the creation of the Interstate Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers (MIQCB). I was one of the first participants in the organization of this movement, one of the first coordinators. Our beginnings were very difficult, because we didn't understand how the product of 400,000 breakers wasn't of interest to traders. This was due to the arrival of palm oil, a cheaper product imported from Malaysia. What's happening that we don't sell coconut like we used to? – that was the question. In addition to the fact that most of the breakers were not members of the rural workers' unions, even those who were members were unable to hold discussions within their organizations. It was good for us to get together, because then we started to discuss our problems and how to find solutions to them. We finally understood that, firstly, what we were doing was Extractivist production and, secondly, there was also a gender issue, because this extractivism was done by women. This whole conversation was part of the Movement's own dialogue. The issues of gender and family was difficult; it was hard for women to leave home to participate in these social spaces. We trained these women and their families. And then we got to the very issue of preserving the babassu groves. We felt that in our region, much of the forest was these areas, and they were being cut down. So we started a big fight to find a market, and this whole fight to save the babassu groves. Because with the great concentration of land, babassu was no longer of interest to the farmers, who wanted to use the tractor. And so, because the forest is still babassu, we need to preserve it; this is a sustainable tree, a palm that has various resources, both for the quality of life of the family and for the environment. From the coconut, we can use charcoal, mesocarp, oil and biodiesel; there are many important things to do with babassu oil. Now we're working with

production chains, with small support for the production of one product or another. It is with our work and our struggle that we honor the legacy of Chico Mendes and strengthen the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.

"Chico Mendes' struggle is a very clear cause for us and for everyone, which is why, since his death in 1988, there have been so many demonstrations, meetings, protests, advances, achievements and resistance."



GTA



RUBENS GOMES RUBÃO

At the beginning of the 1980s, I moved to Acre from Serra do Navio, in Amapá, with no history of relationship with the Peoples of the Forest, even though I had a father who was a rubber tapper, who harvested Brazil nuts in Pará and ended up working for a manganese mining company in Serra do Navio. I arrived in Rio Branco as a musician, to work as a music teacher and became one of the leaders of the Cultural Movement. I was soon approached by comrade Abrahim Farhat, or Lhé, who asked me to help organize the artists' support for the rubber tappers' movement that Chico Mendes was leading in Xapuri. Thus began my relationship with Chico. That's when I learned that there were many people in the forest, and that's when my commitment to the struggles of the Peoples of the Forest, to the people of the forest, began. After Chico's death, I dedicated part of my time to working with children and teenagers on the streets of Rio Branco. With what I had learned from the rubber tappers, we founded a small Luthery Workshop-School (Oela) in Rio Branco. I then moved to Manaus to set up the first formational course in lutherie at a public university in Brazil. Due to the rectorate's change of interest, I decided to leave the academic world and move to the outskirts and organize a "positive crowd" in a second stage of Oela. In March 1998, we opened our Luthery Workshop-School of the Amazon with a class for 40 boys and girls in the Zumbi neighborhood [outskirts of Manaus city]. Ten years later, in 2008, we served thousands of children and young people to help provide an education geared towards the real needs of the Peoples of the Forest. We need to find a way to encourage public managers and society to give the necessary attention to the education of this multitude of children and young people who live excluded within the forest. (On May 28, 2020, Covid took Rubão to the world of the enchanted).

"It is from within the Alliance that we can strengthen the specific struggles of Indigenous Peoples, extractivists and rubber tappers, thus following the history that Chico helped to build."



Imaflora/Comitê Chico Mendes



SILA MESQUITA

I began my activism in the Catholic Church in 1984, first in Catechesis and then, from 1988, in the Youth Ministry. Then, still in 1988, the year Chico Mendes died, I joined the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), where we carried out various projects aimed at preserving lakes and maintaining and breeding fish, until 1994. The 1980s were a challenging time for riverside populations in their fight to preserve their daily catch. It was at this time that the Movement of Volunteer Environmental Agents emerged in Tefé, Coari, Itacoatiara and other municipalities, organizing activists to defend the lakes. In 1997, we started organizing the Movement of Riverside Women, with 22 municipalities. The Movement began to work with three defined themes: documentation, income generation and a training program. Without documentation, forest women, who already live in isolation, are left without citizenship. Today, they all have their own documents. Over five years, we registered more than 50,000 women in the state of Amazonas. Then came income generation, and several women who are now in the spotlight were able to benefit from the project and establish themselves economically, such as dona Socorro, in Itacoatiara, from the São João Batista community, who works with handicrafts and has a history of preserving lakes. Her house faces a lake where pirarucu fish are managed every year. Today they are not only part of the community, but also of the union. They are strong, daring and courageous women who take care of the preservation of the lakes and also take on the leadership of the Women's Movement. Another thing is the importance of the GTA Network in their lives because, through it, people from the organizations begin to believe in the importance of participating in the processes of training, dissemination and proposing public policies. I joined the CPT the same year that Chico Mendes died. I was shocked. I admire Chico, his memory and audacity, his way of organizing workers through consensus, because it was through consensus that Chico managed to achieve so much. Chico always looked horizontally, he never looked from the top down, he never looked from the bottom up. He always thought of the extractivist populations as people who needed to have

autonomy and who had something to propose for the Amazon. That's why, not just for me, but for all the extractivist populations, and for all the Peoples of the Forest, Chico is not just a memory, Chico is an role model for life that inspires us to keep fighting to strengthen the Peoples of the Forest Alliance more and more.

"Chico Mendes passed through Itacoatiara, in our region of the Arari River, and left his trail of love for nature, which joined our riverside way of loving to protect the forest, the rivers, the fish, the springs."

Maria do Socorro Rodrigues da Silva



TWOTWAWHENE HAJI MANCHINERU SABÁ

I'm Twotwawhene Sar Haji Manchineru, "Sabá". I was born, raised and live in the Mamoadate Indigenous Land, here in Acre. I am a Manxineru: a defender of Indigenous Peoples, of nature, of justice and dignity. I started in the Indigenous Movement well before the 1980s. In the village, I started defending myself, my parents, my family and my people from the age of 12. I met Chico Mendes in Rio Branco, at a meeting of the rural workers' unions. We gave a talk together at Eletroacre about defending the Amazon and the conflicts that the rubber tappers and Indigenous Peoples were experiencing. From there we talked to other comrades until we came to the conclusion that we needed to strengthen our union with a big meeting. We held meetings with various indigenous leaders, rubber tappers and river dwellers, including Ailton Krenak, Antonio Apurinã, Siã Kaxinawá, Osmarino Amâncio, Júlio Barbosa and Raimundo Barros. Raimundo Barros was a great comrade. We always went together to raise awareness among rubber tappers and riverside dwellers about the threats of deforestation. At that time, I went to the Cachoeira standoff as a UNI representative. We transported the people in a truck belonging to the Xapuri Union, our only transportation. We were advised not to take too many risks along the branches [inner roads], as several leaders had already been murdered. That's why we decided to hold a public demonstration in Xapuri. With Chico Mendes, we discussed the strategy of broadening our alliances and making our struggle have repercussions. This included Chico's travels and the creation of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. Chico Mendes always said that the rubber tappers' movement was created based on the indigenous model of organization. The most important factor at that time was that we were a group of allies. We didn't fight for space, power or money. We fought together in defense of the Peoples of the Forest, of nature and against exploitation and violence. When Chico died, I

was in Rio Branco and received the news on the Difusora Acreana radio station. It was a shock and a great loss, because we were beginning to implement many actions. In March 1989, we held the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest with indigenous people, rubber tappers, rural workers and other allies, to make it clear that our joint struggle would continue, even after Chico Mendes' death.

"Chico Mendes was a simple and calm rubber tapper, but always very determined and consistent with the collective ideals of the forest inhabitants."



Voices da Floresta



SONIA BONE GUAJAJARA

I'm Sonia Bone, daughter of the warrior Guajajara Tentehar people, who inhabit the forests of Maranhão. To be indigenous in Maranhão is to have the patience of a wise old man. Ever since I was a little girl, I've heard that Indians don't think, that there's too much land for too few Indians, that a good Indian is a dead Indian. But the fact our mouths are shut does not mean that we are silent. I learned from my parents that fighting for a better world is done with struggle and passion. I also learned from the passion of Chico Mendes and all the Peoples of the Forrest that, as he himself said, our fight is for humanity. On Wednesday, 11/01/2023, I was sworn in as Brazil's Minister for Indigenous Peoples, appointed by President Lula. This achievement is not just mine, it is that of the Indigenous Peoples and all the Peoples of the Forest, it is the result of the struggle of the generations that preceded me. In my inauguration speech, I said: "(...) We are here, standing! (...) When I was 17, I was called by my aunt Maria Santana to talk. Aunt Maria is a midwife and a respected spiritual leader. As it wasn't just any invitation, I thought: I wonder what Aunt Maria wants? I got on the back of a motorcycle and went to the Lagoa Quieta village, in the Araribóia Indigenous Territory, to meet her. When I arrived, I saw Tia Maria waiting for me with two gifts, a necklace and a maraca. She then looked at me and said in that serene voice of hers: 'My girl, I want to give you these gifts, which are symbols of leadership. And I give you the power of speech. You'll have the gift of communication, everyone will listen to you. You will grow and everything you have to say will be heard. This maraca will echo and you will be the voice of our people.' So today, I want to tell you that Sônia, who, in order to study, worked in a family home as a nanny and maid, as this profession was called at the time, is here, appointed to the position of Minister of State for Brazil's Indigenous Peoples. And if I am here today, it

"We indigenous people resist because we know that nature is intimately linked to human life and that one cannot exist without the other. That's what we've learned and what we want to teach."

is thanks to the ancestral and spiritual strength of my Guajajara Tentehar people, thanks to the secular resistance of the struggle of the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, thanks also to my persistence in never giving up. (...) I take on this bold and innovative challenge with honor and courage. A mission that Aunt Maria announced so many years ago. Perhaps many people will never understand how significant this moment is for me and for our peoples, perhaps not everyone listening to me knows that the existence of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples is surrounded by an extremely distorted reading of reality. They either romanticize us or demonize us. We are not what, unfortunately, many history books still tend to portray us as. If, on the one hand, it's true that many of us maintain ways of life that are in the imagination of the majority of the

Brazilian population, on the other hand, it's important to know that we exist in many different ways. We are in the cities, in the villages, in the forests, practicing the most diverse trades you can imagine. We live in the same time and space as any of you. We are contemporaries of this present and we are going to build the Brazil of the future, because

the future of the planet is ancestral! The secular invisibility that directly impacts and has impacted the state's public policies is the result of racism, inequality and a democracy with low representativeness, which has caused intense institutional, political and social invisibility, placing us in the sad landscape of the country's social under-representations and under-reporting. There have been centuries of violence and violations and it is no longer tolerable to accept public policies that are inappropriate to indigenous bodies, cosmologies and understandings of land use. (...) In the Brazilian Amazon, [in particular] there are 114 groups of recently contacted Peoples or those who have never had any contact with society. The so-called Isolated Peoples, who are in a state of high vulnerability due to deforestation, illegal mining and



land grabbing. (...) I remember the relatives who were taken from us by the bullets of the fascism that has reigned in Brazil over the last four years, shamelessly spilling much indigenous blood. We remember the strength of those who died in the struggle, such as Paulino, Janildo, Jael and Antonio Guajajara, Ari Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, Dayane Kaingang, Estela Verá Guarani Kaiowa, Wellington Pataxó, Ariane Oliveira, Miss Raissa and so many other relatives victimized by illegal mining, invasions of their territories and so many other actions and omissions by the state. (...) I would like to highlight the strength of Bruno Pereira and Dom Philips, in whose memory I salute all our allies who defend the environment and human rights. People! We are not the only ones who need to live here. We just cohabit Mother Earth with millions of other species. Indigenous Lands, the territories inhabited by other traditional peoples and communities and Conservation Units are essential to curb deforestation in Brazil and to combat the climate emergency faced by all of humanity. Today, you are all witnessing a moment of historic transition, as was the unique indigenous collaboration in the National Constituent Assembly. The Brazil of the future needs the Indigenous Peoples. Everything that is traditionally called culture among Brazilians means everything to us. It is our way of life, our food, our rituals, our use of the land, our practices and customs, both those that are more everyday and those that are ritualized. Culture is also synonymous with struggle! Brazil is plural; it is joyful times, it is colorful and supportive! (...) This Ministry belongs to all the Indigenous Peoples of Brazil, as well as being the patrimony of the Brazilian people, because each living indigenous person represents a climate guardian of mother Earth. We know it won't be easy to overcome 522 years in 4. But we are ready to make this moment the great recovery of the ancestral strength of the Brazilian soul and spirit. Never again a Brazil without us!



UBIRACI BRASIL YAWANAWÁ

My name is Nishiyuaka Yawanawá, given to me by my parents. In Portuguese I was baptized by the Catholic Church as Ubiraci Brasil. I come from a traditional family of my people's leaders. My grandfather, Oshunauwa, baptized Antonio Luís, was the first indigenous Yawanawá to make contact with white people. I don't remember the time, but I think it was at the end of the 17th century, the beginning of the 18th century. I'm his daughter's son. Alongside the leaders, with my grandfather and uncles, I helped in the demarcation of our territory and in stopping the invasion of our land. At the beginning of the 1980s, I went to Rio Branco dreaming of studying and going to law school, as every young indigenous and non-indigenous person dreams. There, I joined other indigenous leaders from Acre and we created the Indigenous Movement of the State of Acre (UNI-Acre). In 1986, Brazil was already discussing the new Magna Carta: the Brazilian Constitution. We joined the other Peoples of the Forest in a movement that brought together rural workers' unions, rubber tappers and us, the Indigenous Peoples, in the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. Also in 1986, the national UNI mapped out the possibility of electing some indigenous leaders to participate in the Constitution. As it still is today in Brazil, we can only have a voice in politics – and be respected – by becoming politicians. And that's if we're elected! In Acre, at that time, the PT formed its own slate for the first time, with candidates for governor, senator, state and federal representatives. I was chosen by the Indigenous Movement to be part of this slate. That's when I met Chico Mendes and traveled with him during the campaign. He was running for state congress, and I, Marina and Bacurau were running for federal. Wherever we thought we had votes, we took Chico Mendes. I brought him to Feijó and Tarauacá, because he was better known in the Xapuri region. He and I dreamed of strengthening the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. We traveled a lot together. We were friends, very much brothers. Chico Mendes was a very determined, simple and humble person. There are many Chicos in our forest today, who are at work struggling to survive

and support their families, without forgetting to think about the common good. We know that many companies are entering the Acre Amazon to open pastures, to devastate. This system is not for us. We, the Indigenous Peoples and rubber tappers who live in this region, still have many needs. This doesn't justify simply generating an economy. Chico was a person who fought hard against this, to the point of losing his life. He was very brave. Chico exchanged his life for the freedom of the Peoples of the Forest. After him, our voice began to echo in every corner of the world. Today, the world is debating global warming – which is a real danger – for all of humanity. And back then, Chico Mendes already foresaw this. And we, the Indigenous Peoples, have also addressed this since the beginning.

“Chico thought about the future for the good of humanity. That's why today he has the respect and eternal love of the indigenous leaders of the Amazon.”



Vozes da Floresta



VALÉRIA PAYÊ PEREIRA

I'm from the Kaxuyana people, from the Tumucumaque Park Indigenous Land, in the north of Amapá, on the border with Suriname. When I was eight years old, in order to prepare myself to support my people, I went to school in Juruti, Pará, where I completed elementary school. I finished high school and trained as a nursing assistant in Belém. After graduating, I returned to the Tiriyós Mission, my village, where I worked at the public health clinic, for Funai and at the Amapá State Health Department. I began to take part in the political discussions and projects of the Tiriyó, Kaxuyana, Wayana and Apalai, who live in the Tumucumaque Indigenous Park and the Paru do Leste Indigenous Land, articulated around the Association of Indigenous Peoples of Tumucumaque (Apitu). Later, in Manaus, I specialized in indigenous project management through the Indigenous Peoples Demonstrative Projects (PDPI) program. As a COIAB Councillor for the state of Amapá, I began to take part in the Amazon Indigenous Movement. It was a great challenge to join a regional movement. As well as COIAB assemblies and meetings, I took part in the 500 Years Indigenous March in 2000. It was very good, because I was able to help the Movement, and also to learn a little about the reality of other peoples and other Indigenous movements in the Brazilian Amazon. I've been active in the Indigenous Women's Movement since 2005. I started out in Coiab's women's department and, from there, we began to strengthen the national Indigenous Women's Movement and helped strengthen the struggle of indigenous women in the Northeast and East, through Apoinme, and in the South, through the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of South Arpin-Sul. Our aim is for the women, with their perspectives as mothers and women, to help strengthen the overall vision of the Indigenous Movement. Through representation, women can be leaders. I am a coordinator and my role is not a decorative one. There are difficulties, especially in terms of management, but I try to learn from my relatives, to get to know a little of the reality from the experiences of other places. It's up to us women to maintain the space we've won.

"One discussion that indigenous women have been having is about the environment. Since most of them make their handicrafts using raw materials from the forest, they want to know more about management plans, about the struggle started by Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak in the Peoples of the Forest Alliance."

Rosimere Arapasso

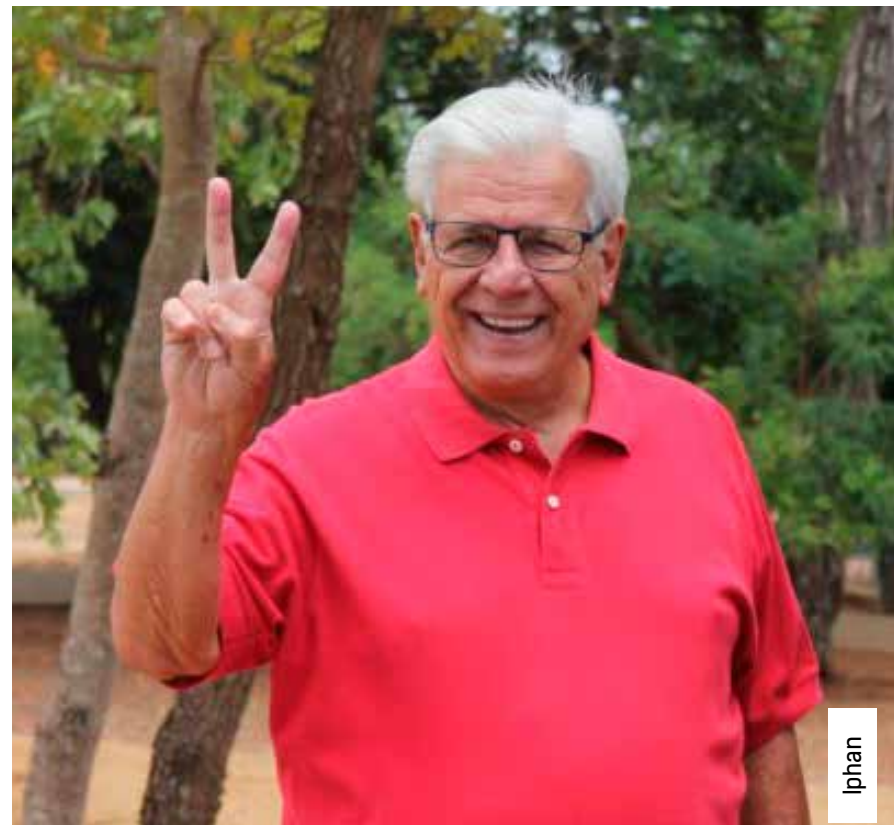


PEDRO WILSON GUIMARÃES

I met Chico Mendes in the struggles for Brazilian re-democratization, in the defense of the Peoples of the Forest, in the struggle for peace, in the construction of the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), in the struggle for Human Rights, in the founding of the PT and the CUT and in the construction of a better Brazil for all. I met Chico in São Paulo, Brasília, Goiânia, Porto Velho, Rio Branco, Brasília, Xapuri and in Acre throughout his life. I met Chico Mendes through the newspapers, fighting for the defense of indigenous people, riverbank dwellers, rubber tappers, squatters, workers and fishermen who knew how to live, work and preserve the land, forests, waters and animals of the Amazon. To talk about Chico is to remember his fight against the devastation of the Amazon rainforest by land grabbers and farmers who, having destroyed land in the Atlantic Forest, the Pampas and the Cerrado, were now invading his land with cattle, ruthlessly cutting down rubber trees, chestnut trees, hardwoods and fruit trees in order to plant colonial grass. The cattle were worth more than the people. Chico Mendes, with his denunciations and standoffs, defense of the forests, defense of a more just and fraternal society, held a meeting in Brasília of people in solidarity with the rubber tappers. With this meeting, in 1985, Chico Mendes and his companions began a long journey through the Amazon, in defense of the forests and their native inhabitants. At the meeting in Porto Velho in 1986, there were more and more denunciations of deforestation, mercury in the waters of the Madeira River; roads threatening the Tapiri, the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau and the reserves of the Guaporé River, the Javari River, the Jamari River and mining on indigenous lands. It was the time of the 1987-1988 Constituent Assembly. In 1987, a meeting was held in Goiânia called Peace Week, because of the Cesium-137 radioactive accident that happened in Goiânia with worldwide repercussions. At the Faculty of Education of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG), hundreds of indigenous leaders, rubber tappers, peasants, teachers, students, technicians, churches and the media debated the Cesium-137 accident,

which has still not been resolved, as well as deforestation and fires. These meetings in Brasília, Goiânia, Porto Velho and others led to advances in the 1988 Constitution, the year that didn't end for Chico Mendes. One day, a rifle fired a clear shot into the forest, in the heart of the Amazon. The UN Global 500 award [recipient] died, and that shot echoed through a forest of peace in the senseless, unfinished war waged by the neo-colonizers of Amerindia.

"Chico Mendes, yesterday, today and always, alive in memory and history."



SEVERIÁ KARAJÁ

I'm Severiá Karajá-Javaé, born in a village on the banks of the Araguaia River. Today it is no longer a village, because the last Karajá family that existed was ours and, after my parents died, there was no one left to look after the village. Between 1969 and 1970 I lived with a Franciscan nun, who brought me to become a nun too. I studied Languages at the Catholic University of Goiás (UCG). Before that, I had already intended to return to an indigenous village and resume my life as an indigenous person. At the time, Cipassé Xavante was also a student in Goiânia. We started dating, I went with him to the Xavante village, we got together to ask permission to get married and in July 1987 we had our non-indigenous wedding in Goiânia. Then we went to the village of Pimentel Barbosa, where we had our indigenous wedding using the Xavante rite. The only reason I didn't get married in my village was because at that time my village no longer existed. In the Movement, I began to participate mainly during the time when the Peoples of the Forest Alliance was being put together. I ended up meeting Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak. It was at this time that this great Alliance for Brazil and the Amazon was formed. I remember the first time we met: it was in Goiânia, during Peace Week, after the terrible radioactive accident involving Cesium-137. That was in September 1987, when rubber tappers and indigenous people took part in the event in solidarity with the people of Goiás. We agreed to hold the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance in March 1989, in Acre. At that time, Goiânia was the victim of fear and a lot of prejudice. Many people were panicking because the accident had been so bad. Even so, the indigenous people and rubber tappers were present. They understood that this was a good opportunity to continue discussing the Peoples of the Forest Alliance with more leaders. I remember Chico Mendes saying that, for indigenous people and rubber tappers, defending the forest was like defending life itself. Then came death, sadness, disconsolation and, in the midst of it all, the decision to hold the Alliance Meeting as we had agreed. In March 1989, without

Chico Mendes – but in order to honor the commitment we had made to him – we all went to Acre and held our First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest.

“Chico Mendes told us that the Peoples of the Forest struggle was a struggle that needed the support of many people: many allies from inside and outside the forest. When we heard Chico Mendes talk like that, we felt at the time that it was a matter of life, not survival, but life itself.”



Vozes da Floresta



DECLARATION OF THE PEOPLES OF THE FOREST

The traditional populations that today mark the Amazon sky with the bow of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance proclaim their desire to keep their regions preserved. They understand that the development of the potential of these populations and the regions they inhabit constitutes the future economy of their communities and must be guaranteed by the entire Brazilian nation as part of its affirmation and pride. This Peoples of the Forest Alliance, bringing together Indians, rubber tappers and river dwellers, which began here in this region of Acre, extends its arms to welcome every effort to protect and preserve this immense but fragile system of life that surrounds our forests, lakes, rivers and springs, the source of our wealth and the basis of our cultures and traditions.

National Council of Rubber Tappers
Union of Indigenous Nations
Rio Branco, Acre
March 1989





João Roberto Ripper/CTA



ADILSON VIEIRA

Twenty years after the creation of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, which united the struggle of indigenous peoples, rubber tappers and other Amazonian populations in Acre and Brazil, the Peoples of the Forest gathered in Brasília in September 2007 for their 2nd National Meeting, a reunion of the leaders who helped consolidate the conquest of the Forest Peoples' political space in Brazilian society. Coming from the nine states of the Legal Amazon (Acre, Amapá, Amazonas, Maranhão, Mato Grosso, Pará, Rondônia, Roraima and Tocantins, and from all the other Brazilian biomes Caatinga, Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, Pampas and Pantanal), our Forest Peoples –rubber tappers, indigenous people, açai collectors, nut collectors, caboclos, quilombolas, coconut breakers, fishermen, herb doctors, artisans – previously seen as part of Brazilian folklore, arrived at the II Meeting as social actors capable of impacting national public policies. During this meeting, in which we honored the memory and revered the legacy of Chico Mendes and all the leaders who have fallen in defense of the Amazon rainforest and the peoples who live in it, how much has changed! The main objective of the Second National Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest (the First Meeting took place in Rio Branco, Acre, in March 1989, months after Chico Mendes' assassination) was to build a collective space for reflection on the changes the Movement has experienced in these two decades: we have conquered a series of Extractivist Reserves (RESEX), in the Amazon and other biomes; many Conservation Units (UCS) have been created throughout Brazil; and several Indigenous Lands have been demarcated, scattered throughout the national territory. All of this is the result of a struggle and positioning of the Peoples of the Forest, extractivist communities,

"We dream, as Chico Mendes always dreamed, of making the Amazon a world where many worlds fit, a forest where all diversities fit, a beautiful and plural Amazon, for the Peoples of the Forest and for all Humanity."

Indigenous Peoples and other working populations, not just in the Amazon, but throughout Brazil. The II Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest showed that our achievements were the result of all the socio-environmental struggles we have waged in the Amazon and throughout the national territory. Together, we demonstrated the enormous degree of maturity of the Socio-Environmental Movement in the Amazon and, above all, this great union of the Peoples of the Forest, who are the ones who contribute the least to global warming and the ones who suffer the most from the already perceptible effects of climate change. Many leaders spoke of this and gave as an example the drought that hit the Amazon in 2005 (and which will be devastating again in 2023). Once again, indigenous communities, rubber tappers and river dwellers – who in their entire existence have never contributed even one ton of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere – were left isolated, without food, medicine, drinking water and, most tragically, without the waters of the rivers to navigate their canoes and boats. We called everyone: activists, environmentalists, the private sector, the government and society to a dialogue. A total of 5044 people answered our call. There, we faced the challenge of once again reinventing the Amazon. After three days together, we concluded that the reinvention of the Amazon is necessary and possible, because we, the Peoples of the Forest, have once again decided that this reinvention must and will happen. In this sense, Chico Mendes' dream of making the Amazon, parodying the Zapatistas, "a world, an Amazon where many Amazons fit" – a plural Amazon, symbol of a new human universality, born of a new loving and solitary society, was present throughout the II Meeting of the



Peoples of the Forest. We heard from each other that this reinvention is in fact already taking place, both in memory of our heroes and martyrs, who were so well remembered during the II Meeting, and through the continuous struggle of our comrades who, with their sweat, their work and their thinking, are developing innovative paths to guarantee the economic, social, cultural and biological sustainability of the Amazon Rainforest and the Peoples of the Forest. These paths are embodied in the advancement of Extractivist Reserves, in community management of lakes, in agro-forestry systems, in the collection of native honey, in the use of fibers for creative handicrafts, in the healthy handling of our fruits - of different shapes, colors and flavors - in the demarcation of Indigenous Lands and in all the other exciting daily activities of our people in the heart of the forest. However, after the II National Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest, we were left with the distressing certainty that "we are still vulnerable, very vulnerable", a sentiment voiced by Júlio Barbosa, Jecinaldo Saterê-Mawé and so many other leaders. After the meeting, this phrase kept hammering away in my head for days, because we were all there, together, moving forward in building the society of solidarity and fraternity of Chico Mendes' dreams, but when we returned home, a different world awaited us. Even though we're happy with the many achievements we've made, we know that we still have a long way to go. Because there is still a long way to go before our extractivist, indigenous and traditional populations have full citizenship. In memory of Chico Mendes, we are all committed to the decision that we cannot and will not wait any longer for the Peoples of the Forest to be able to take pride in their status as Brazilian citizens.





Comité Chico Mendes



THE GREEN CRY THAT WALKS

My trip to the United States was interesting. After the CNS meeting [1985], in January 1987, I received a visit from a UN representative, here in Xapuri, and this person made a point of going with me to the rubber plantation, to learn about our experience. When it was March, I was invited by the environmental organizations to go to the United States, to Miami, and it was with this trip to Miami that the fire started, that the story of the international recognition of our struggle began.

Chico Mendes





FRANCISCO. CHICO. CHICO MENDES.
RUBBER TREE. RUBBER TAPPER.
RUBBER PLANTATION.
LEGION OF MEN AND DREAMS.
GREEN BREAKING THROUGH GREEN.
A DAGGER IN THE MEMORY
OF WATER, STONE AND WOOD.
THE MEN?
THE KAPOK TREE, THE RUBBER TREE,
THE STONE OF MOUNT RORAIMA,
THE BLOOD THAT POURS FROM THE TRUNK
ON THE RUBBER PLANTATIONS OF
XAPURI ASK:
WHERE WALKS THE EXILED SHADOW OF
CHICO MENDES?
ORGANIZER OF GENERAL WINDS
WHO FIGHTS AFTER THE FENCES,
OF ALL THE FENCES ON EARTH...
CHICO: A GREEN CRY THAT NEVER CEASES.

PEDRO TIERRA



ADRIAN COWELL

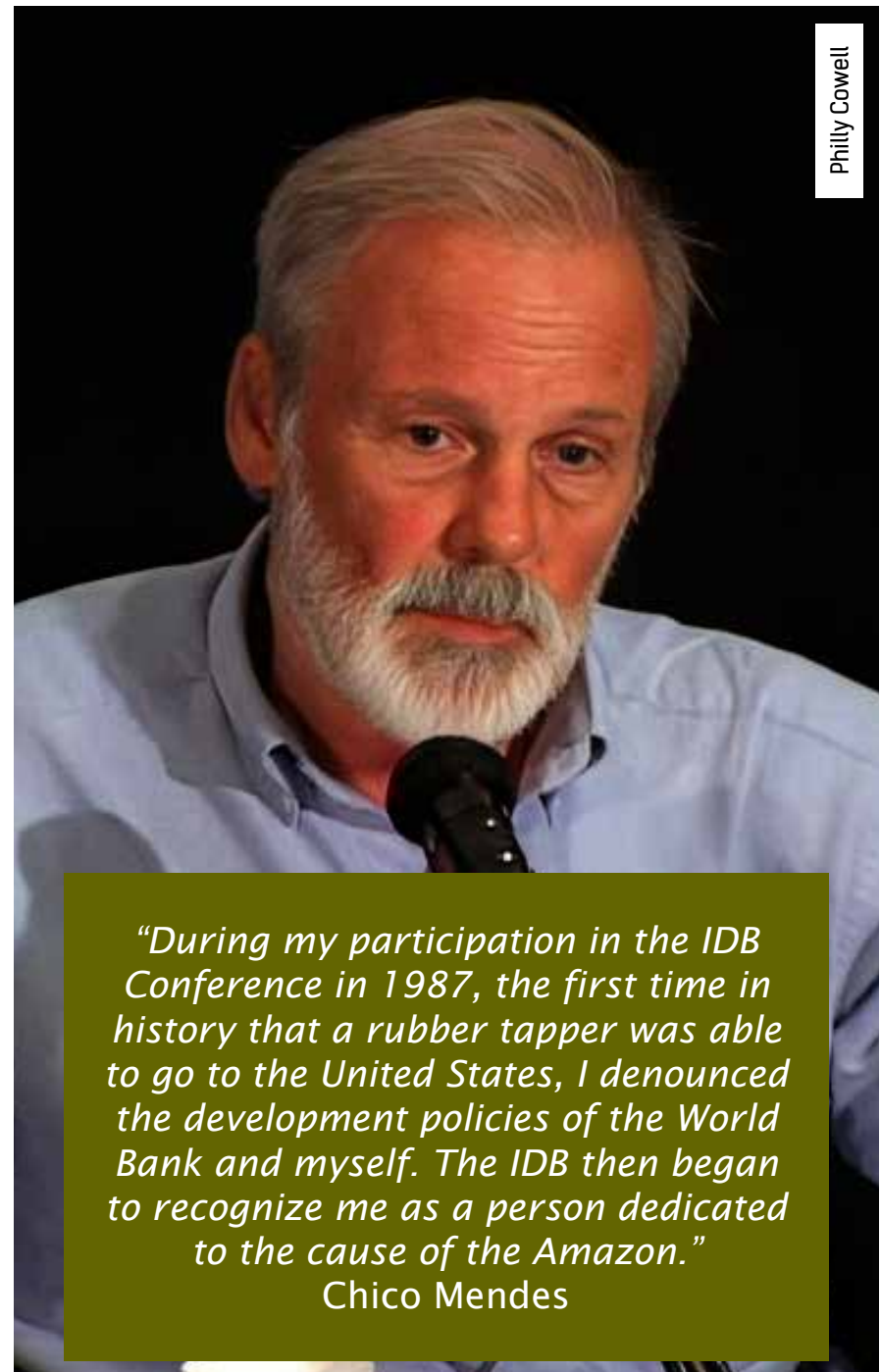
I first became interested in rubber tappers in 1980, after receiving a call from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). We were filming the deforestation process in the south of Rondônia when Robert Lamb, an advisor to the Director of UNEP, Mustafa Tolba, called me to ask if UNEP should buy pieces of the Amazon to preserve endangered species. I replied that this was the worst thing they could do, because Brazil was under a dictatorship and the military was very concerned about the so-called internationalization of the Amazon. To his question about what they could do, since they shouldn't buy parts of the forest, I said I didn't have an answer. I promised to let him know when I found one. That's how this question entered the head of a journalist working in the mud and mires of Rondônia. Over the next five years, we filmed the entire process of forest devastation and its consequences. We saw the colonists forced to abandon their now infertile lands in despair. By the end of the 1980s, around 60% of the deforested areas in Rondônia had already been abandoned. During this time, we filmed several roads passing through former rubber plantations, where each rubber tapper had an average plot of 300 hectares. In general, the officials of the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Incra) were in favor of the poor agricultural workers, but they were only allowed to give 50 hectares to each settler. Many rubber tappers received the 50 hectares, but this area was insufficient for extractivism. With no alternative, most sold their plots and ended up in the slums of the cities. This tragedy happened because there was a legal impossibility – the Land Statute didn't allow Incra to give more than 50 hectares to each family – but also, and genuinely, because no one at Incra knew what to do with the forest outside of agriculture. In 1985, we decided to attend the First National Meeting of the Rubber Tappers. We were filming, at the head of the BR-429 highway, a tractor cutting through the virgin forest towards the rubber plantations of the São Miguel River. Cameraman Vicente Rios and I drove our jeep for two days and nights to get there in time. In



Philly Cowell



Brasilia, we met Mary Allegratti, who invited us to film the meeting. When we heard, during the meeting, the proposal for Extractivist Reserves, where the allotments could be used but not sold, we saw that the rubber tappers had a concept for the use of the forest's natural resources, with sufficient appeal to UNEP. When Mary introduced us to Chico Mendes, the trade unionist who led the defense of the rubber plantations in Acre, we asked Chico for permission to film his work. Upon receiving the film, the UNEP staff understood that this was a better alternative than buying land in the Amazon, a proposal that was not only Brazilian, made by natives of the forest, but in defense of the forest based on the rights of squatters, guaranteed in the Constitution. When I read about Chico's nomination for the world's biggest environmental award, the UN Global 500, I saw how easy his case was to defend. Chico received the award in Birmingham, England, in July 1987. After the award was presented by the director of UNEP at the Central Television studio, which sponsored our series *The Decade of Destruction*, I prepared the documents for Chico's nomination for the Better World Society award in the United States. These awards allowed me, Steve Schwartzman and Barbara Bramble to introduce him to many reporters. I thought that with this exposure, maybe I could help protect him. When the assassin Darci Alves handed himself in to the police, he said he was shocked by the enormous pressure from the Federal Police, ordered by the President of the Republic himself, to reduce the international outcry. For nature defenders, killing a Global 500 is equivalent to killing a Nobel Prize winner. Unfortunately, the Alves family didn't know that. It was a huge tragedy for Chico's family; for all of us, his friends; for Brazil and for the world. It's a pity that the Alves – and those behind them – didn't understand this obvious truth in time.



Philly Cowell

"During my participation in the IDB Conference in 1987, the first time in history that a rubber tapper was able to go to the United States, I denounced the development policies of the World Bank and myself. The IDB then began to recognize me as a person dedicated to the cause of the Amazon."

Chico Mendes



ALFREDO SIRKIS

I met Chico in Xapuri in 1987. I was organizing the Green Party in Acre and, even though he was from the PT, I went to Xapuri to meet him. It was an intense, instant friendship and there was an immediate pact to support the rubber tappers' struggle, which, from our point of view, represented the coming together of social and environmental struggles. When I returned to Rio, I started to set up a support network for Chico Mendes, who soon came here and took part in a Green Meeting in Petrópolis. At the time, I did an interview with Chico for the *Jornal do Brasil* (JB), which didn't want to publish it. The editor at the time said that he was more interested in gold miners than rubber tappers. Angrily, I replied that he might be interested in him when he was assassinated. I was constantly worried about Chico, who was being threatened with death by several cattle ranchers, who with the standoffs had prevented from advancing their "pasture frontiers". One of them, Darly Alves, seemed the most dangerous. The CNS discovered that Darly was accused of murder in Paraná, and had an arrest warrant. The information was leaked to him, who went into hiding and swore Chico to death, who he considered responsible for revealing his background. In Rio, right after the November 1988 elections, we organized a huge event called "Save the Amazon", which consisted of a marathon of walking, running and cycling from the Botanical Garden to the Estácio de Sá monument, on the Aterro do Flamengo, and the placing of a huge jute cloth with the words "Save the Amazon". It was a remarkable demonstration. There's a scene of Chico talking to me in my old olive-green Opala, as we drove to the Sugar Loaf cable car. We were talking about the danger posed by Darly Alves. I was trying to convince him to stay in Rio until we found the funds to hire a group of private security guards, because, according to the stories he told, the policemen protecting him were unreliable. At one point I thought I had convinced him. Chico decided to stay in Rio. But, because he missed his wife, he decided to spend Christmas in Xapuri. A month later, he was murdered. He became an international martyr for the ecological cause;

a symbol, a banner of struggle, but the loss was irreparable. He was an extraordinary human being: generous, sensitive, funny and one of the few people capable of uniting disparate sectors around a common cause: rubber tappers, indigenous people, ecologists, North American environmentalists, PT, Green Party, etc. After Chico, we haven't found another leader with the same characteristics.

"The cause of the Amazon became international with the repercussions of his death, but I think that, alive, Chico Mendes would have done much more."



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ANA LUÍSA ANJOS

It was as a volunteer with the Amanaka'a Amazon Network in the 1990s in New York that I discovered the greatest asset of my life: my new friends, the Peoples of the Forest! Learning from them about the Amazon Rainforest, their cultures, their struggles made me want to help keep the forest standing, made me want to "put on this shirt" [join the team] and never take it off my body again. The friendships I made with indigenous people, river dwellers and rubber tappers gave my life a new meaning. These friends of mine are no longer Indians, rubber tappers and river dwellers living in a distant forest, but teachers in my constant learning about the environment, peace and life. When I heard that Chico Mendes died trying to convince the world that standing forests were more profitable than forests that had been devastated and turned into grass to raise cattle, I thought: that's the banner I want to defend! Since then, I've been working hard to honor the memory and legacy of Chico Mendes. I do this for myself, for my son Troy, for the Peoples of the Forest, for the children of the communities I pass through, who always welcome me with tenderness, and for the hope I have that, with environmental awareness, better times will come for the entire population of our planet Earth. Chico Mendes, in all his simplicity, gave his life to save the largest "garden on the planet". It's impressive to see how a man from the forest, from Xapuri, from Acre, from the interior of the Amazon can, after 35 years, continue to mobilize us, moving us to fight. It's impressive how this strong, inspiring and lively presence continues to bring people together, build policies and, most importantly, bring together allies in defense of the forest and the Peoples of the Forest. That's why I think Chico Mendes is a great symbol, a great leader and one of Brazil's greatest heroes. Chico Mendes Lives! Save the Amazon!



Ana Anjos

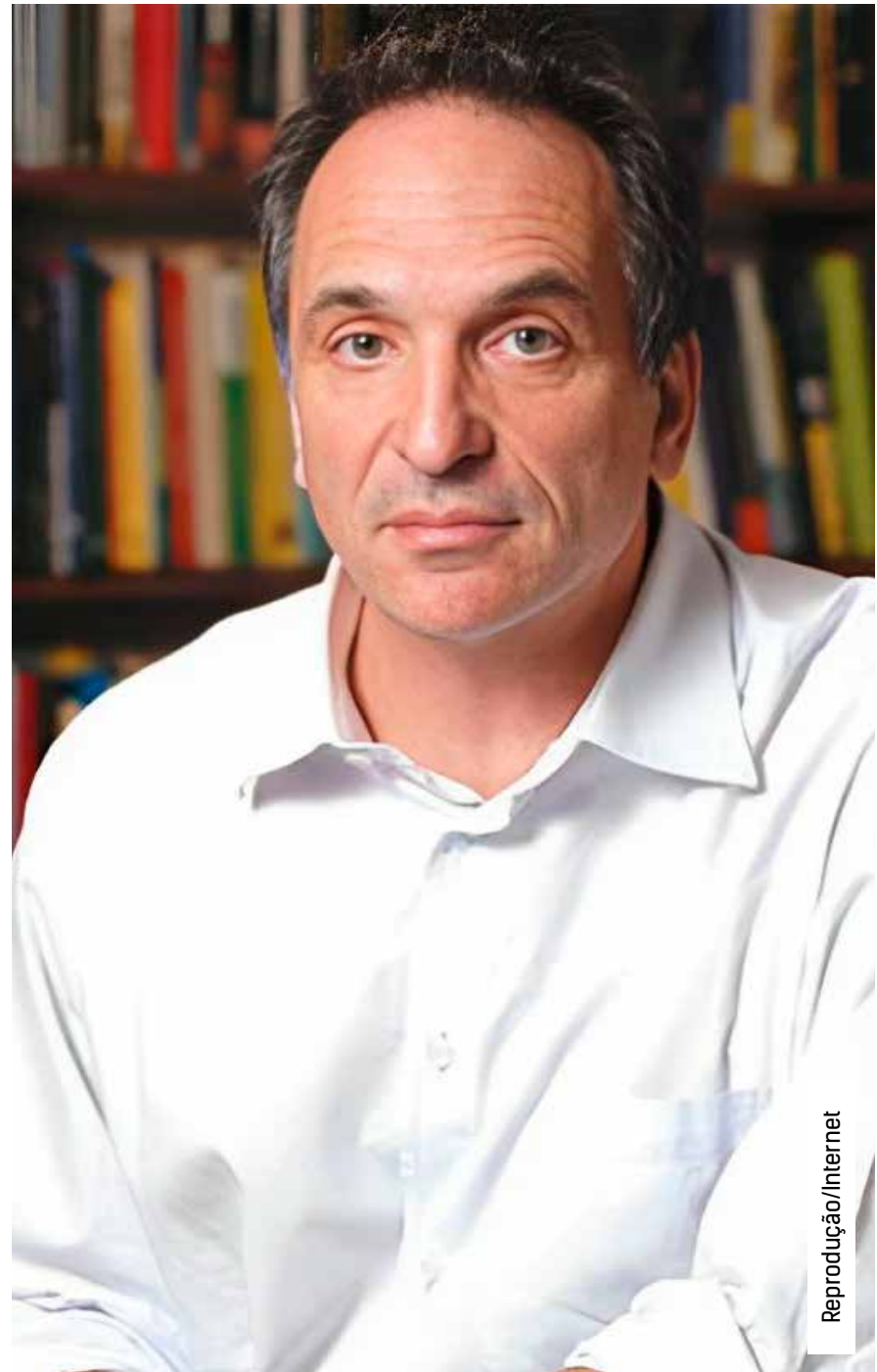
"Chico is gone, but his example of life continues to plant the seeds of the desire for change in the hearts of each and every one of us."



FÁBIO FELDMANN

I met Chico Mendes in the early 1980s. Throughout the Constituent Assembly period we spent a lot of time together, including in the months before his death. We always had a relationship of partnership and reciprocity. We will never forget Chico's ability to be extremely firm about his positions, while at the same time being sweet and gentle with the people around him. One of the strongest and most beautiful memories I have of Chico is from the Constituent Assembly period. He would sit in my office waiting for me for hours, but he wouldn't get upset, because he was always talking to everyone, and he said he couldn't perceive the time passing. After Chico's death in 1989, as a tribute to him, we introduced the category of Extractivist Reserves into the National Environmental Policy (PNMA). After 35 years, Chico would certainly have had a lot to be proud of, having been one of the great people responsible for inspiring changes in Amazonian environmental policy.

*"The forest has lost something.
A part of itself has died."
Alder Järede*

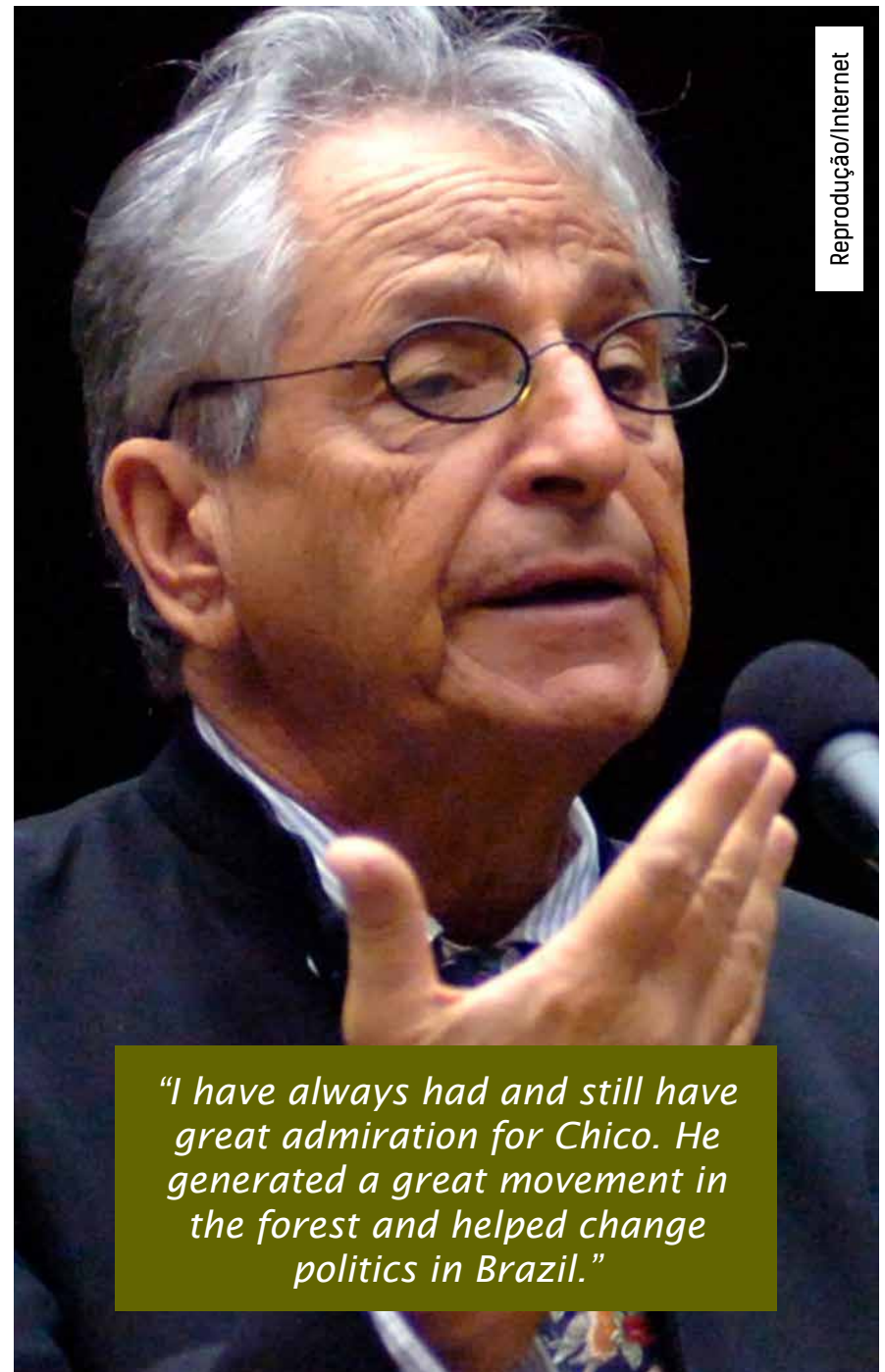


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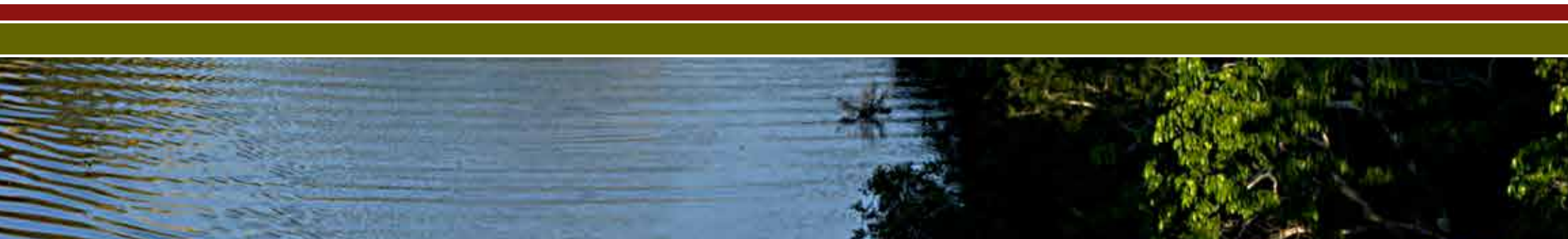
FERNANDO GABEIRA

In the mid to late 1980s, Chico Mendes had a strong desire to break the isolation they lived in Acre, and we in Rio de Janeiro were starting to work in the Amazon, with a great need to get involved with the people of the forest. Chico was looking for a broader alternative to disseminate the issues he was working on, especially the defense of the forest. But what would have been a simple political relationship ended up becoming more complex, because Chico Mendes showed up in Rio de Janeiro threatened with death. This forced us to establish a type of action aimed not only at protecting the forest, but also, in an emergency, at protecting his own life. As part of this effort, we sent Lucélia Santos and a photographer from Folha de São Paulo [newspaper] to Acre. So, we did some reports on what was happening there, drawing attention to the threats to Chico's safety. I remember that, in Acre, Lucélia went to the authorities, even to the state governor, asking for his protection. Unfortunately, this process ended up impeded, because the murder happened. It was around Christmas when we received the phone call informing us that he had been killed; I immediately went to Xapuri, and so did Lucélia. Lucélia had greater knowledge of the local reality, of the people themselves, of the threats and, with her knowledge, she was able to contribute a little, indicating where the accused were, the main suspects. I went to the funeral and then as a journalist I followed the investigations, the escape of the murderers and the trial after the escape. In the process, we learned that Chico's death was not an isolated incident. There was a willingness on the part of important sectors in Acre to remove people like Chico Mendes from the political process there. This shows that, in fact, the incident with Chico Mendes was only the beginning of a process in which power was changing hands in Acre, and Chico Mendes unfortunately had to serve as a great seed.



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"I have always had and still have great admiration for Chico. He generated a great movement in the forest and helped change politics in Brazil."



BARBARA BRAMBLE

When I met Chico Mendes, he was already at the end of his life. I visited Acre with Steve Schwartzman to discuss the possibility of Chico going to Miami for the Annual Meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). On that visit, we accompanied him to several rubber tapping communities around Xapuri. We saw how Chico went from family to family, from companion to companion, talking to the CNS leaders to convince them that he wasn't abandoning the struggle to become a star, that he was going to the United States to represent everyone's interests, not to sightsee; that he was going to talk to the bankers to try to stop the dismantling of BR-364. Chico Mendes patiently explained that the purpose of the trip was to demand that the IDB consult with the communities before continuing with the construction of that destructive highway, financed by the World Bank. He said he was going to demand that the highway only be built after all the social and environmental safeguards that could protect the interests of the indigenous populations and rubber tappers had been observed. Chico took advantage of each of these conversations to explain that, when the Extractivist Reserves arrived, each family would continue on their rubber plantation, with rights of use, but without being able to sell the land, because the land would continue to belong to everyone, under the guardianship of the State. After all these consultations, he finally agreed to travel. In fact, he went to Miami and from there to Washington, the capital of the United States, where he met with members of Congress and journalists. He then made similar trips to New York and Europe. This partly explains why the news of his assassination the following year caused such a stir and had such an impact. People from all over the world knew him and had talked to that rubber tapper with the soft features and tone, that tireless defender of the forest, who just tried with all his might to protect his people and his forest from destruction. In the last years of his life, Chico Mendes began to realize the enormous potential and scope of his Extractivist Reserves proposal. As we now know, Extractivist Reserves have

proven to be a good strategy for forest conservation. Chico didn't have the time or opportunity to hear the terms that experts use today – payment for environmental services, carbon credits and reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation – but the idea he fought and died for, that the forest should be seen for its economic value, is within each of these modern concepts.

"Chico believed - and he was right - that the Amazon could be economically viable as a forest if its natural resources were valued and if sustainable use was the chosen way to exploit it."



Philly Cowell



CARLOS MINC

I met Chico Mendes around 1986. I got to know him more from 1987 onwards, in Rio de Janeiro, and also in Acre, accompanying a standoff, where I saw how the families embraced each other around the rubber trees, Brazil nut trees and giant samaú trees, to prevent the tractor-pulled chains and chainsaws from destroying the trees and devastating the forest that gave them shelter and sustenance. Chico Mendes was a very sweet, firm and sensitive person. He was also a great trade unionist, he had that idea of unity, of the land, of collective work. Chico stood up to the rubber barons and organized the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS). But he also had a very strong spiritual dimension: he talked to the trees, to the animals, he respected the magical beings of the forests. Chico Mendes was a man of unity, of dialogue, but he was also a man of confrontation. In the past, Indians and rubber tappers became enemies. Chico Mendes managed to build a bridge between the rubber tappers and the Indians. As well as organizing the union of rubber tappers, he also organized the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, which is something broader, creating a dialogue and also fighting for the demarcation of Indigenous Lands. He was something of a Gandhi of the Forest. He didn't take violent action. He organized standoffs: the families standing there, hugging the trees, confronting the tractor-pulled chains, were reminiscent of the Indian people refusing to hand over salt to the British. It was akin to peaceful civil disobedience. A form of non-violent confrontation, but one that gives a moral strength, a very great dignity to those who fight for their rights. I think these were some of the reasons that made this simple man a world-renowned figure as a defender of the Amazon. Minister Marina Silva has a lot of Chico Mendes' tradition. She's from Acre, she was Chico's friend and companion, and they were always in the same fight. And becoming Minister for the Environment is directly linked to this legacy of the national and global significance of this struggle. I had the honor of becoming friends with both of them.



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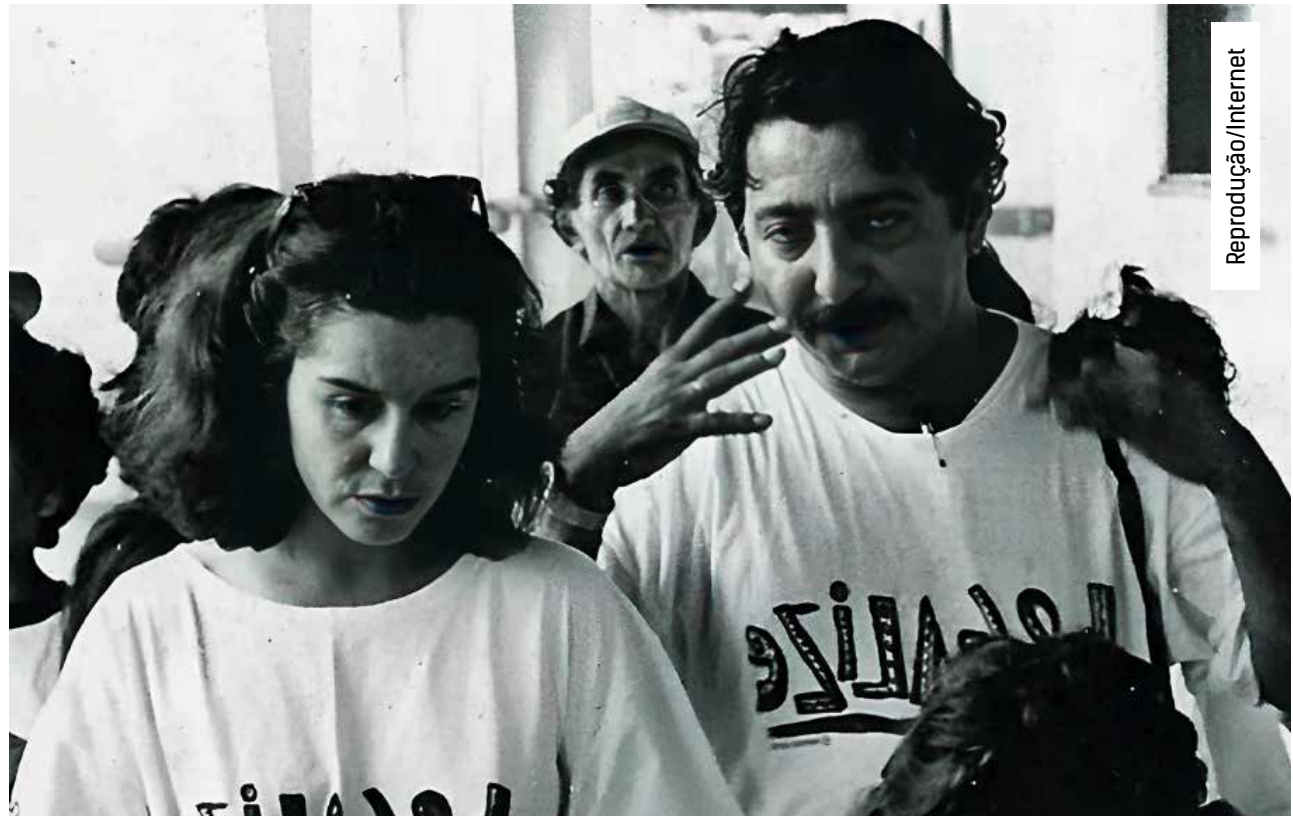
"Chico Mendes represents the fusion of two great ideals: the ideal of justice, of the fight against inequality, of people not being excluded and, on the other hand, he represents the ideal of ecology, of the forest, of the rubber tapper, of the indigenous people, of the respect he had for talking to animals and talking to trees."



LUCÉLIA SANTOS

I remember as if it were yesterday the first time I set foot in Xapuri. When I landed in Rio Branco, there he was, Chico Mendes, waiting for me on the runway with open arms! It was an important moment, the re-election of the Xapuri Rural Workers' Union, where Chico was running for his second term. It was May 1st, 1988. Chico would be assassinated just seven months later. Our relationship was short, but tremendously intense. We bonded, we started working to get him re-elected to the Union; we held the Meeting of the Women of the rubber plantations with the indigenous women, with the caboclas, their stories, their problems, their proposals; and also the meeting with international groups of environmentalists in defense of the forest and in search of Chico; in fact, with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Incra, and the procrastinators of the time in general! I'll never forget Chico's "astonished" face when he heard a bunch of lies about the speed the government intended to enact the Extractivist Reserves project, the small nut processing plants and his other projects. Chico never reacted with any aggression or demands, and that's what I want to record in my little testimony about him. Chico was, without a doubt, the most "non-violent" of all the companions in my life, the purest and most without malice that I have seen circulate on this planet!

"A unique being... And I have one conviction: if Chico hadn't given his life the way he did in defense of the Amazon Rainforest, there might not be anything left of it by now."



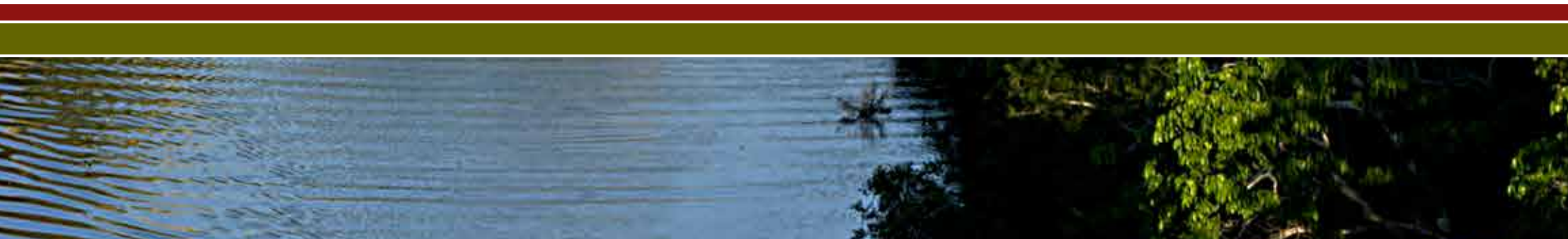
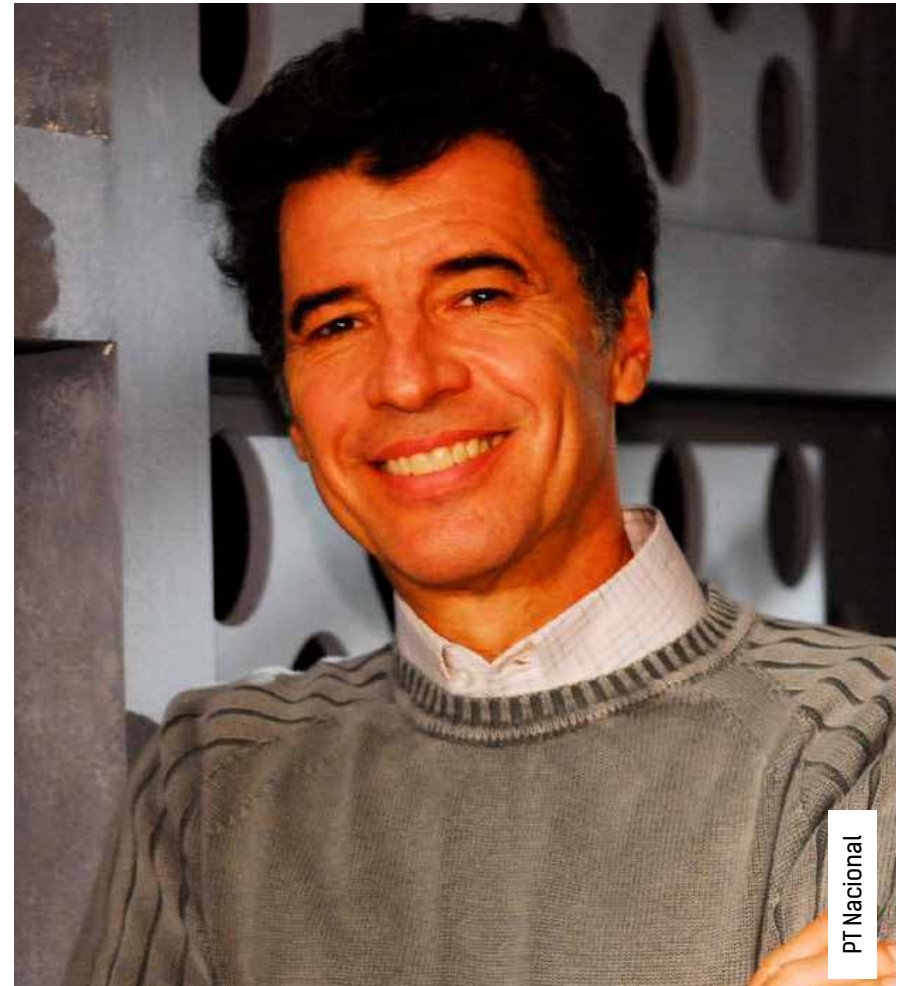
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PAULO BETTI

My interest in the Peoples of the Forest cause began and strengthened, like almost everything good that has happened to me in life, through theater. This ancient art opened my eyes and heart to understanding a little more about this world inhabited by men and legends. It was in 1977, with the theater group led by Celso Nunes, "O Pessoal do Victor". We wanted to put on a play that portrayed the universe of our indigenous brothers and sisters. In those years of censorship, the issue was practically forbidden on stage, for reasons of "national security". In retrospect, I understand even more the importance of the work of Márcio Souza, who was writing and putting on plays on this subject at the time. Our group decided to put on "The Iks", a play by Peter Brook, Denis Canam and Jean Claude Carriere, which director Yacov Hillel had seen in Paris, and which we thought was perfect for talking about the subject without running into censorship. In those days, the theater was obliged to talk about what it wanted through subterfuge. The text was based on Collin Turnbull's book, "The Mountain People", and was about the starvation culture of a people living in a national park in Uganda, Africa. The play was exquisite and hard-hitting. It spoke of the process of cultural degeneration of that people, plagued by ancestral hunger. In the end, the anthropologist, completely wrong, preached the extinction of the group, separating its members, because he thought the Iks had no way out. It was quite a provocation. We spent a year studying and trying, through laboratories and theatrical exercises, to become Iks. For us, the young actors in that group, they, the Iks of the mountain, were our Forest People, our Indigenous Peoples. We studied indigenous Brazilian dances and myths. We delved deeper, getting to know the problems and visions of anthropologists and sertanistas. A year of rehearsing and another year of presenting and living the play brought us into contact with people like Cláudio and Orlando Vilas Boas, Sidney Possuelo, Peter Fry, Marcos Terena, Ailton Krenak, Ricardo Rezende, Marina Silva and many other leaders.

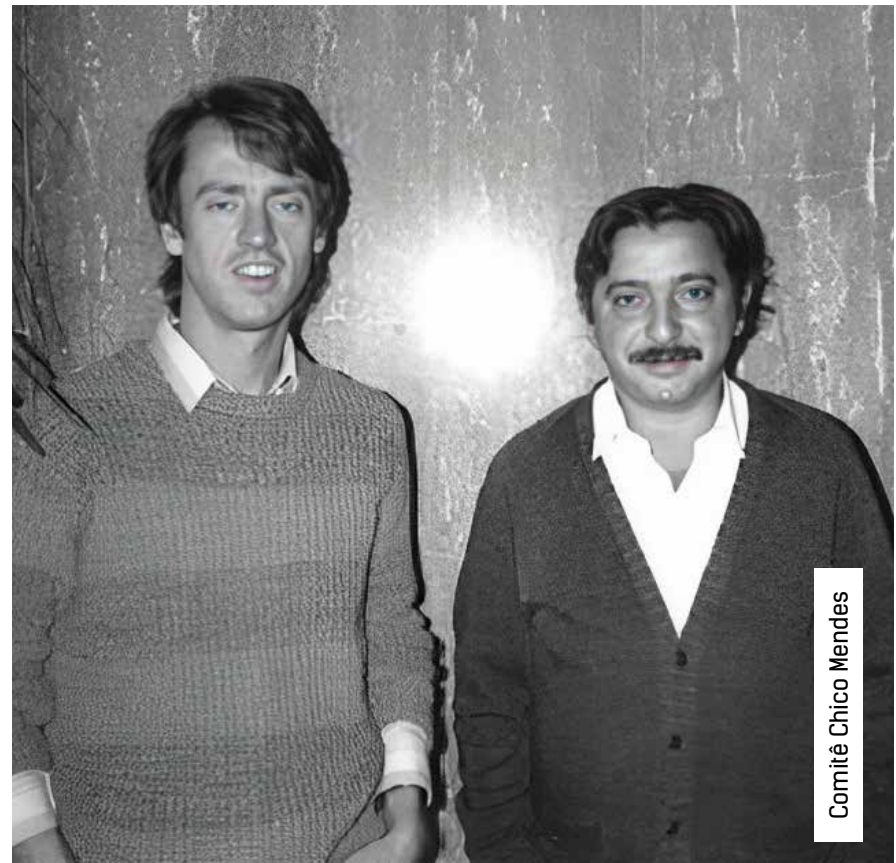
"Today I also consider myself a man of the forest. Many thanks to the legacy of Chico Mendes. Many thanks to those who continue the struggle. Thank you to everyone who accepted me. Many thanks to the theater!"



STEPHAN SCHWARTZMAN

On December 22, 1988, Chico Mendes was murdered in his blue and pink house in Xapuri, Acre, in the western Amazon, almost on Brazil's border with Bolivia and Peru. News of Chico's death, unlike the other 1,500 murders of rural workers carried out by enforcers in the interior of Brazil over the course of that decade, was quickly disseminated around the world. Two days later, Chico's death made the front page of The New York Times. For more than a decade, Chico Mendes led the communities living in the interior of the forest, taking action against the deforestation carried out by ranchers from other regions of the country. Chico and his comrades fought to protect the forest where they lived, and this cost him and other leaders their lives, such as Wilson Pinheiro, years earlier in Brasília. Chico had a vision that the Acre rubber tappers' struggle had to expand beyond the borders of Acre, beyond the borders of the Amazon itself. Chico Mendes was one of the first leaders to understand that Acre's poor and isolated rubber and chestnut tappers, as well as the other traditional communities that lived off the forest, needed to create an alternative to the unequal and destructive development model brought in by the federal government. It was then that they conceived the Extractivist Reserves as protected forest areas, managed sustainably by the communities, who, in return, would have the right to use the forest and access to social policies. Chico founded the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS), which since 2009 has been renamed the National Council of Extractivist Populations, to defend traditional communities and to make Extractivist Reserves a reality. He also forged an alliance with the Indigenous Peoples, putting an end to decades of enmity between Indians and rubber tappers, because both saw the need to come together to defend the way of life and quality of life of their peoples and communities. This is how Chico Mendes and his companions, both indigenous and rubber tappers, created the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.

"The IDB is coming to Acre, wants to talk to me, wants to go with me to a rubber tapper reserve area; and, according to what we know, they are willing to accept the CNS proposal, which is to create Extractivist Reserves in all the strategic points of conflict in the Amazon, especially in the Acre Valley."
Chico Mendes



Comité Chico Mendes



VIRGÍNIA GANDRES

In the early 1990s, I was in New York studying video production and looking for an opportunity to work with the peoples of the Amazon, defending the legacy of Chico Mendes. One day I ran into my friend Ana Luísa Anjos, and she told me about Zezé Weiss, who worked with the Peoples of the Forest, and was promoting an Amazon Week [through NGO Amanaka'a] and wanted someone to coordinate the Week's environmental video exhibition. At the next meeting, I went with Ana, who introduced me to Zezé, and I boarded this ship, which I'm still traveling on today. We held the Amazon Week with dozens of forest leaders and it was great, because it was an incredible, diverse experience that I will never forget. Once the Week was over, someone had to travel to take care of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance's delegation to the United States. I volunteered, Zezé approved and I accompanied the group – it was the time of Milton Nascimento's concert with the TXAI album, and we went to New York, San Francisco and the country's capital, Washington, on this trip through the United States. Our task was to organize the political agenda. We visited all the major newspapers, The New York Times, the Washington Post, everyone, and the main human rights, environmental and financial organizations, such as the Caucus for Human Rights, Amnesty International, and the World Bank. At this World Bank meeting, there were a lot of men in suits waiting for us, and we were very late. When we finally arrived, there was an unease, the suits were impatient. Then Ailton Krenak decided to clear the air and said: "Gentlemen, I'm sorry. Cipassé Xavante is entirely to blame for our delay. He's very vain, he spent a whole hour painting his bangs with urucum [anatto – natural dye]." Then everyone laughed, everyone relaxed. That was a very important meeting, because it was there that the World Bank people said, for the first time, that they would consider the Peoples of the Forest's proposals. Later I saw in written theses that, since 1991, the Bank has changed its investment policy in Latin America and started supporting projects for the Peoples of the Forest. It's nice to see that at least a little bit of this change has come about, albeit almost anonymously, through the work of Amanaka'a

and the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. Then I took part in the other Amazon Week and, at the invitation of Antonio Macêdo, Siã Kaxinawá and Ailton Krenak, I decided to move to Acre. I was engaged to the vice-president of the Stock Exchange, Anthony Dixon, and I dropped everything to move to Cruzeiro do Sul. I hope that this book will be translated into English and one day Anthony will forgive me.

"It was an immense privilege to accompany the Peoples of the Forest Alliance's delegation on Milton Nascimento's TXAI tour of the United States."



Virginia Gandres





CHICO SEGUIRE
NADA NO

**“I KNEW THAT DEATH WOULD COME
WITHOUT WARNING”**







**"I KNEW IT WOULD COME, DEATH
WITHOUT WARNING, BUT DEATH IS
FACED WHEN THERE IS A PEOPLE
BEHIND IT."**

NICARAGUAN SONG

ANÍBAL DINIZ

Francisco Alves Mendes Filho was a grain of wheat thrown into the soil that has multiplied into ideals of sustainability, with increasing importance across the planet. Chico Mendes was a simple man who lived and thought far beyond his time. Today, 35 years after his brutal murder, we can look around and confirm that his death was not in vain. The defense of the forest – and the people who live in it – is present in the laws, institutions and consciences of many people who are increasingly committed to the socio-environmental struggle for sustainability. This is why Chico Mendes is a unique man. He resisted, led standoffs, denounced the atrocities of enforcers against squatters and brought to the attention of world public opinion that the Amazon was in danger of being destroyed by chainsaws. For this struggle, Chico Mendes won several international awards, such as the UN Global 500 Award. I was with Chico Mendes and even spoke to him a few times. In the 1980s, in the house in the Bahia neighborhood, in the Trotskyist apparatus that Antonio Manoel set up for militant meetings and to shelter comrades from the countryside who came to PT meetings, I shared chicken and potatoes prepared by him. It's a pity that his stay in our midst was so short. I remember, as I walked to the bus stop to catch the bus to the university, the copious weeping of the late Jorge Nazaré, who was walking down Silvestre Coelho Street to get on Getúlio Vargas Street, heading downtown. It was around 9 p.m. when I heard Jorge crying that Chico had been gunned down in the backyard of his house. We went together to meet Toinho Alves, who was in a nearby restaurant. He stopped dinner and we immediately went to the Aldeia TV station, from where, minutes later, with the technical support of Josenir Melo, he went on air to make the bombastic announcement. Today, Chico Mendes is recognized by the UN as one of the great pacifist personalities in history, alongside Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, with posthumous tributes in various cities around the world. The bravery of this great Brazilian, educator, rubber tapper, trade unionist, environmentalist and founder of the Workers'

Party, allowed the saga that began in Acre to reach the world. That's what this book is about, containing testimonies from dozens of people in tune with his ideals. The then senator of the Republic and now minister Marina Silva did justice by including Chico Mendes' name in the book of Heroes of the Homeland on September 22, 2004, through Law 10,952. What a hero!

"Chico Mendes didn't want to die, but neither did he accept the possibility of cowering in the face of those who wanted him to remain silent."

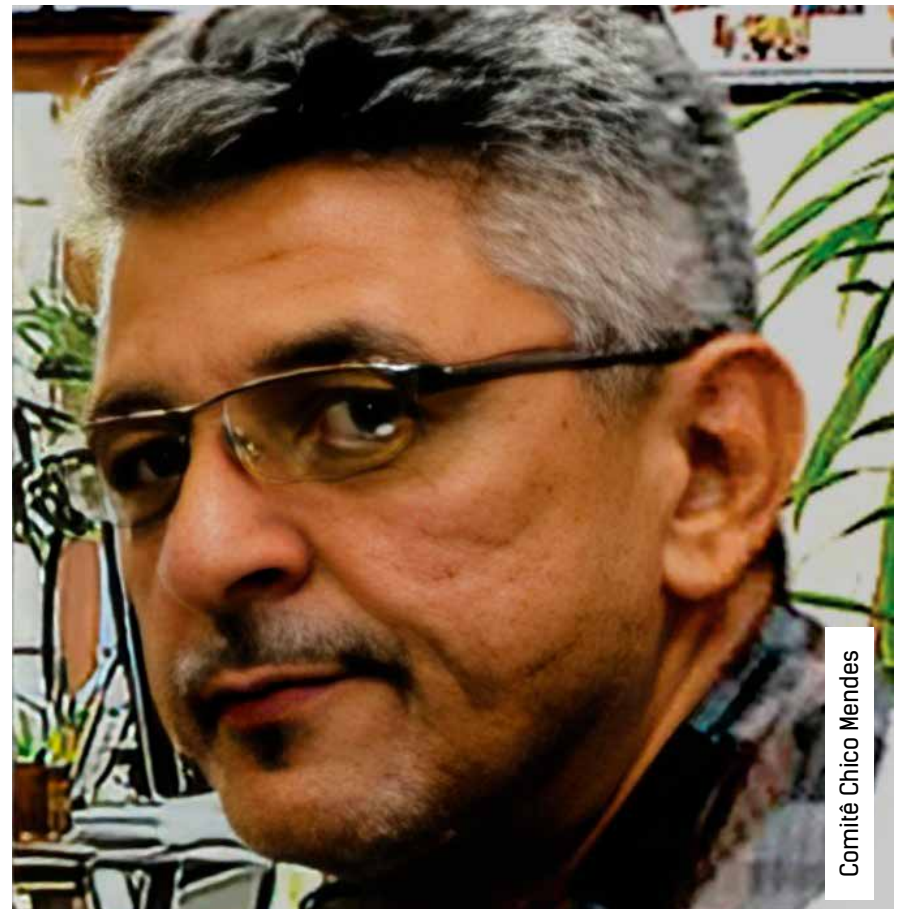


ANTONIO MONTEIRO

My history in the Movement goes hand in hand with Cacá Araújo's, because we practically started out together in the PT and in our work with Chico Mendes. I worked in Brasiléia and was close to the Union, which was led by Wilson Pinheiro, until his murder in 1980. Wilson Pinheiro's death came as a shock to everyone and marked the Trade Union Movement greatly, because he was the first prominent trade union leader to be murdered in Acre over land issues. In 1980, even before Wilson Pinheiro's death, I was transferred to Rio Branco, met Cacá and we started working very closely together. Our work in rural extension brought us closer to Chico Mendes who, at that time, was already looking for alternatives to keep the rubber tappers producing sustainably in the forest. We believed in him and started working towards a rural-city alliance, also through the PT and our underground party, the PRC. But Chico always went beyond the PRC, he moved around and had the admiration of the entire left. Chico had an advanced stance that an alliance with all the forces of the left was very important. We had a much smaller vision than Chico, we wanted to bring everyone into the PRC. And Chico, who was a person of dialogue and was never sectarian, was the one who built these bridges. One of the times that really marked my life was when he met me 10 or 15 days before his death and said that the farmers had announced that he wouldn't finish the year, that he would die, that he wouldn't see the year 1989. I proposed that he take his family to Rio and spend 30 days there. We knew about the threats, but we didn't believe them, in fact we didn't want to believe them. On December 22, at night, a friend of mine named Patricia told me that Chico had just been murdered when he was trying to go out for a shower in the backyard of his house in Xapuri. I spent the whole night crying, calling friends, talking about the tragedy, and I was all the more heartbroken because he had told me a few days before that he was going to be killed, that he wasn't going to see the New Year. I supported physical revenge, but it was decided against. So, one of the ways I paid tribute to Chico was to give my son, who was about to be born,

the same name as his son. There was an understanding that physical revenge wasn't appropriate at the time, so I paid my silent respects. On June 20, 1989, my son was born, and I called him Sandino.

"To this day I get emotional talking about Chico Mendes, because he was a person who marked my life forever."



Comité Chico Mendes



CARLOS ALBERTO DE ARAÚJO CACÁ

I'd been hearing about Chico Mendes since the 1980s, when I started working at Emater here in Acre. In 1981, Antonio Monteiro and I worked with small producers. We challenged the rural extension service that only supported farmers. Cardoso, who was one of the founders of the PRC in Acre, invited us to a meeting at his house, where Chico Mendes was. At that meeting, we formed the main PRC cell in Acre and appointed Chico to take care of what he was already doing, which was his work with the rubber tappers. Chico was our link with that segment. We were very young, Chico had already been through a lot in his life, and this made him understand the importance of the collective struggle, because he knew that if living in the forest was difficult enough, imagine a solitary struggle to save it. He knew that he needed to have many more allies than the political position of a party. When Chico ran for state representative, I was in charge of organizing a conversation between him and the academic world. We were worried because he was our main leader, so we prepared material for him to follow during the visit. When it came time to talk to the professors, Chico did everything but what we had agreed. He left with the support of most of the teachers, but in his own way. At the time, we said he was undisciplined, and we got angry. It was only afterwards that we realized that this was Chico's greatness, his essence, which was his ability to talk to everyone without losing focus. That's why he broke with our sectarianism and united the indigenous people with the rubber tappers and created the Peoples of the Forest Alliance. When Chico was killed, the dismantling of the Movement began. It had been very fierce, but the political game became very rough. When I heard about his death in Niterói, a friend said to me: "They've killed a great leader from your region." When he said that, it immediately came to mind: they've got Chico! I went through a

period of great disillusionment, it was a time when I distanced myself. I was a bit lost. Over time I realized that the best way to keep Chico's soul alive – and our own – is through struggle. I'm happy to believe that many of Chico's dreams have been realized, although there is still a lot to do.

"Chico Mendes understood, before any of us, that the environmental flag unified differences."



Vozes da Floresta



GENÉSIO DE NATIVIDADE

I went to Acre through the Institute of Amazonian Studies (IEA), invited by Mary Allegretti, to be a lawyer for Chico Mendes and the Social Movement, at the beginning of 1988, the year Chico died. As I had experience in the land area in Paraná and the rubber tappers had possession but no documentation of their areas, my first objective was to defend their possessions. I started defending Chico Mendes because the landowner Darly Alves da Silva applied for repossession of the Cachoeira rubber plantation at the Xapuri Forum, where his brother was the clerk and, as he couldn't get into Cachoeira because of the resistance of the rubber tappers, he turned his wrath against Chico Mendes and Gomercindo Rodrigues, who was Chico's advisor. The defense then became a personal defense for the two of them and of the Union. It was a defense of rights, because in addition to the repossession process, they filed a police suit against the rubber tappers, accusing them of crimes they hadn't committed. From then on, we experienced many conflicts together, both in Brasília and Xapuri – especially in Brasília – because Chico's people had already won the leadership of the Union, but the federal government kept intervening. It wasn't until October 1988, after the new Constitution of the Republic had been approved, that the Ministry of Labor left the Brasília Union. Chico wrote down everything he said. Wherever he went, he reported back to us. He made an important visit to the United States. He went afraid but came back happy because he was well received and spoke out against the financing of the BR-364 highway, which was being done with disrespect to the Indians and rubber tappers. He managed to get the financing of the highway blocked until the socio-environmental impact studies were carried out. But when he returned from his trip, he already knew that the Acre politicians, allied with people like Darly, were going to ruin his life. It became very personal with Darly. A while back, Chico had told me that those bastards must have been criminals in the south of the country and that he would, if he could, check them out. On one of my trips to Paraná, I searched the Curitiba Forum and

found out that Darly and his brother, Alvarino, were being sought by the police in the town of Umuarama for murder. So I went to Umuarama and got the warrant for their arrest. Then, arriving in Rio Branco, I went with Dom Moacyr and Chico to deliver the document to police chief Mauro Spósito, who wasn't there. We left the warrant with Deputy Ildo, who took no action. A while later, Mauro Spósito called me to say that the procedure was incorrect, that the delivery had to be formalized with a letter. I did the paperwork he asked for, but with that delay the information was leaked to Darly, who escaped without difficulty.

"Today, I say without fear of being wrong that the state failed, and that it was the state's failure that caused Darly to flee and, shortly afterwards, the death of Chico Mendes."



CTA



JOÃO MENDES

I'm João Mendes and Chico was Francisco Mendes, but as far as I know we're not related. But even though we weren't related, we were very close. I met Chico through some doctors from Ceará who were friends of mine, and who were also friends of his. We had a different friendship, because I was a bank clerk and I never took part directly in any of his fights, I never went to a standoff. But at the time of the standoffs, whenever he came to town he would visit me at the bank or at my house. Sometimes he'd come in and say "João, there's going to be a meeting at the Union, send us something, what can you send?" At the time Lucélia Santos came to Xapuri [in May 1988], he came to me and said: "João, boy, host Lucélia at your house, she's a famous artist. Can you host her?" I always helped in any way I could, even in the PT. Today it's easy to be a PT member, but back then it was very difficult. When the PT arrived here, it was the stuff of rubber tappers. One day he came into the bank and said to me: "João, why don't you join the PT?" In 1986 I joined the PT, at his invitation. And when people came to ask me about this membership, I said that I wasn't on any party's side, I was on Chico's side, and that if Chico Mendes, who was such a good person, was in the PT, then I was also in the PT. Chico came home one day and said. "João, I'm going to London to receive an award." And I joked: "Chico, you don't know English and you want to go to London?" He said: "But I'm going, there are people waiting for me there, and I'm going." So I called some friends, we pooled our money and gave it to him to travel. He was always at the house, sometimes just to talk a bit, sometimes to ask for help, never for himself, always for the Movement. We knew about the threats and did what we could to protect him. One day he came home, it was dinner time, and I said: "Chico, have dinner with us. When we went to sit down, I got out of my seat and put Chico there with his back to the wall." My wife asked why I had changed my seat. I said that there were a lot of threats against Chico and that it was better for him to stay where a bullet couldn't reach him. The other day he came in and said: "João,

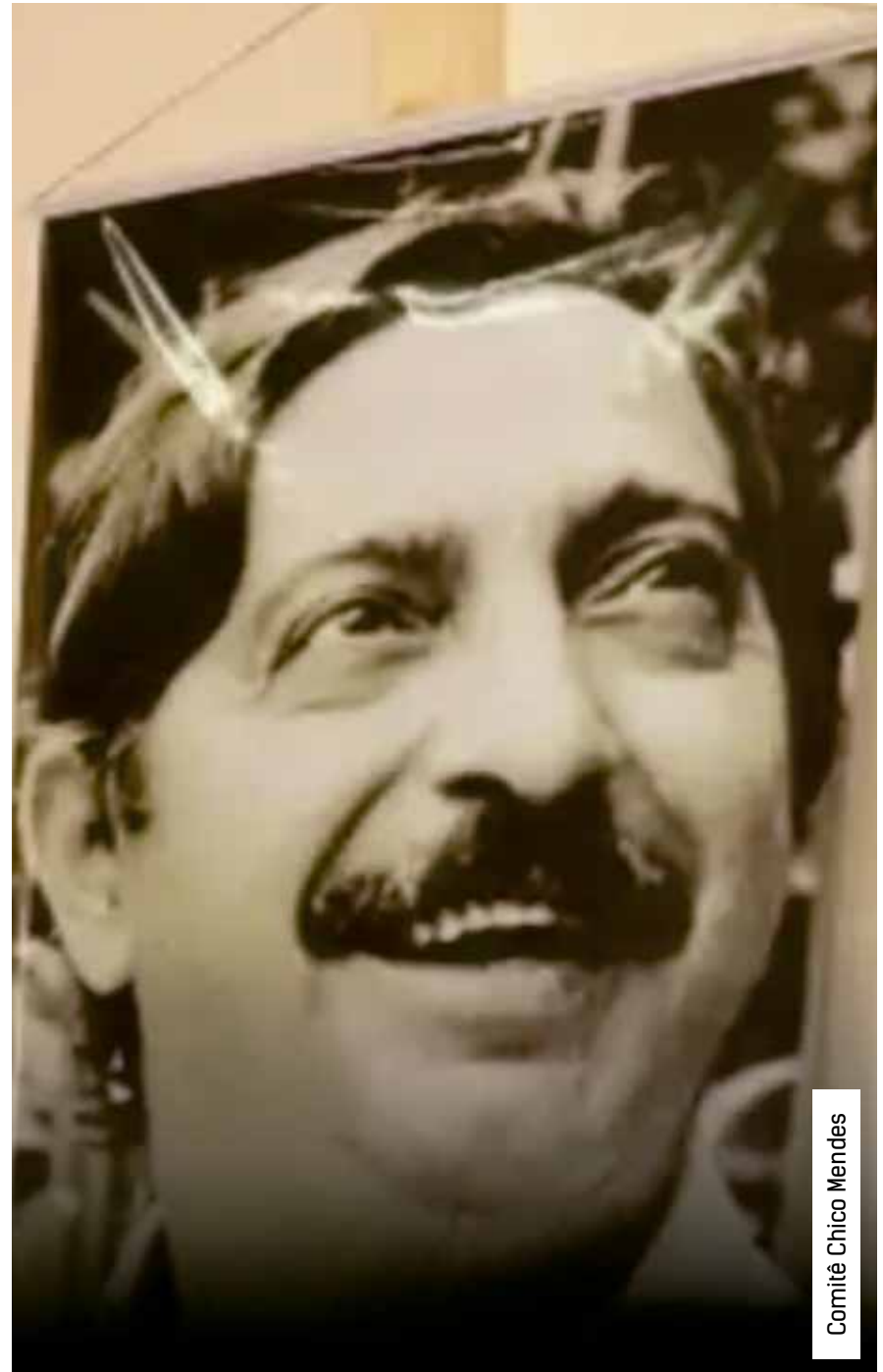


João Mendes



I need to borrow your jacket to go to the United States.” Chico was like that, he wasn’t shy about asking to borrow a jacket, and I liked him a lot because of his simplicity. After one of his last trips, he stopped by the house and said: “João, boy, I’m buying that little blue and pink house.” And I said: “Chico, you deserve a better house. And he said: “No, João, my comrades live in very simple houses, sometimes even with dirt floors, how am I going to live in a different than theirs? I’ll be fine in that house.” Chico was very distressed by the threats. I told him to go away for a while. A few days before he died, I talked to him about it. But he said, “No, João, my work is here.” A week before he died, he sent me a card with a message wishing me peace and a less violent society. It was December 15th, the day he turned 44. I invited Chico to celebrate and he said: “Let’s leave it until Christmas, we’ll get the comrades together and have some wine at the union.” On the 22nd, he went to the bank in the same shabby jeans, the same Franciscan sandals he liked to wear, and with that little diary under his arm. He had a coffee, smoked a cigarette and left. In the afternoon, I was still working when the news came out that he had been shot. When they said they’d shot Chico, I still hoped he’d survive, but the way he’d been shot, there was no way. It was such a sad Christmas in Xapuri... the whole town was in mourning, it was so sad.

“What remained of Chico Mendes was this good memory, because the ecology that we are thinking about today was already an important thought in Chico’s life.”



Comité Chico Mendes



JOÃO ROBERTO RIPPER

I'm João Roberto Ripper, I'm a photographer and I went to Acre at the end of the 1980s to photograph the Movement of indigenous people and rubber tappers who gathered in Rio Branco for the First National Meeting of Peoples of the Forest in March 1989. At that meeting, in addition to the pain, there was an immense feeling and a deep desire to organize the continuity of the struggle and to make the Extractivist Reserves happen, that collective project to defend the lands, the trees and the Peoples of the Forest, for which Chico Mendes died fighting. During the First Meeting of the Peoples of the Forest, which was also the Second National Meeting of the Rubber Tappers, Osmarino Amâncio, one of the great leaders of the Movement, used a phrase that I have never forgotten. He said that the weeping of those who had always resisted was understandable and necessary, but that it couldn't last longer than the blast made by the shotgun that killed Chico Mendes. With this, he moved his comrades to recover from their suffering with discipline and organization, one of Chico Mendes' mantras. He also spoke a lot about the importance of the female comrades participating, the great women of the forest, and this gave strength to the group of mourners. I wondered how I could help ensure that the struggle would never stop, that Chico Mendes' death would never be in vain. From then on, my photos were used in the struggles of the rubber tappers and the Peoples of the Forest. I can't remember how many times I went to Acre to document the trial of Chico Mendes' murderers and those of other leaders, or the Extractivist Reserves and other achievements of the social movements. Going around Acre, I was amazed to see how all the inhabitants of the forest spoke the same way, how they all fought for the same banners of protection for the Amazon, so that the rubber tappers' allotments would remain in the hands of the rubber tappers. It was as if each person was a leader and each leader was Chico Mendes.



"The weeping and pain of a rubber tapper can only take as long as the sound of the bullet that killed Chico Mendes."
Osmarino Amâncio Rodrigues



João Roberto Ripper

OS FARÁ RECORD

JORGE VIANA

For me, it was a mixture of privilege, joy and sadness to have lived through the most delicate phase of Chico's life, his last years, his last days, until that fateful December 22, 1988. We lived through two moments: one of near consensus that Chico had discovered a new way of walking, and one of insecurity for fear of the violence that ended up killing him. At the same time that Chico, in his simple way of being, filled us with the conviction that we now had a new agenda capable of winning over the world, we were also experiencing the threat of the most dramatic and unacceptable rupture, which was the loss of his life. Our poet Thiago de Mello says that we don't always have to look for a new path, that sometimes it's enough to find a new way of walking. Chico, who was a great articulator, was discovering something very new, which was to put the Amazon on Brazil's agenda from an environmental perspective. For many, at the time, Chico's speech seemed like something from an alien world, at a time when the immensity of the Amazon swallowed up its problems. Without today's resources, without satellite communication, the overview of the Amazon was very short. Even for us, it sometimes seemed that the problem was not and never would be as big as Chico made it out to be. Today, what I regret most is not having Chico here with us, celebrating the good things that came after him and fighting to correct what hasn't worked out yet. Because in that 35-year gap between that phase, so interesting and so sad, so full of hope and fatality, there is a middle ground that has a lot of substance. How can you talk about victory with the loss of life? Our political struggle in Acre was a forerunner because it successfully took on the responsibility of carrying forward Chico's vision of the world and the Amazon. Personally, I always have

"The ideals, the dreams of Chico won, they gained much more strength than that of the bullet, of physical elimination; they gained an eternal strength, which is being more or less assumed by Brazil and the world, and by us here in Acre as well."

Chico as a kind of advisor within my memory, indicating my responsibility in this process. Chico's legacy has always been in the back of my mind, and I'm sure that many comrades who occupy positions of power in Acre and Brazil feel the same way. Our commitment is to materialize the ideals that Chico so well signaled to us. He saw that the best way forward was to turn the local struggle, which attracted little attention, which brought together few allies, into a big fight, a fight for the world. And Chico made this huge leap with simplicity, convincing us that there's no point in fighting for work if we don't have a home, that there's no point in having a home if we don't have the environment. Chico saw, long before we did, that home and work were part of the same environment and that by defending the environment, that environment being the Amazon, Brazil, the planet, we would be defending bread, land, work and freedom. Chico was doing all the fighting within a vision that none of us had at the time. Carrying on Chico's legacy forced us to be creative, to break with paradigms, to challenge ourselves and to focus on environmental issues without the slightest prospect of votes, because in reality they took votes away; without the slightest prospect of a mandate, because in reality, talking about Chico's dreams avoided winning elections. But, little by little, we began to win our mandates: first, Marina; then I joined the 1990 gubernatorial campaign, which we didn't win, but which helped us move forward. Slowly, things began to improve for Acre and for Brazil, with, for example, President Lula himself, who comes from this path of struggle, becoming the first working class president in the history of Brazil. In January 1993, I took office as mayor of Rio Branco. Even though it was a smaller space of power, we decided to use it to move



forward. We started by creating parks, like the Chico Mendes Park itself, because Rio Branco didn't have any environmental parks. The dream was to bring Chico's ideas into reality. In this spirit, we bet on creativity and innovation, with Binho Marques, Toinho Alves, Edgard de Deus and myself at the forefront. We created the Municipal Secretariat for the Environment, to put Chico's legacy in Acre's life for good. Today, looking back, I don't know if what we did was to be accountable to Chico, or to redeem ourselves for our impotence in the face of the fatality of his death, or if it was because of our learning, of having understood what Chico thought needed to be done. Perhaps because of the sum of all this, we were very successful in the mayor's office, and even before it, in the 1990 gubernatorial campaign, where the introduction of the forest idea, the symbolism of Acre's anthem and flag, helped to bring about a radical change in concepts. With the campaign, we managed to solve something that had always bothered Chico: not being welcomed, not being understood in his own land. Sometimes Chico was understood in Europe, in the United States, but not in Acre, not in Xapuri. And not getting the necessary resonance at home for what he stood for frustrated him. Then came the government,

and at that stage Marina had already been elected senator (she was elected halfway through our term as mayor). In Acre, we were starting another political practice that was new for Brazil. We were pioneers in what was making NGOs grow – the

environmental movement, growing and gaining political strength all over the world – but institutionally, within the Brazilian state, it was very tenuous. On this journey we had losses, distortions and mistakes but, overall, we got it right. The first law of our government was created on January 13, 1999, just 13 days after I took office: it was the Chico Mendes Law, which innovated with a kind of remuneration for the environmental service done by rubber tappers – the law remunerated them through a better price for Extractivist products. The term, at the time, corresponded to what Brazilian law allowed, which was to consider this remuneration as a subsidy, but our aim was already to recognize the environmental service. This was key to stop the bleeding from the mass transfer of extractivists to the cities. Some indigenous peoples themselves were staying more in the city than

in the villages. So we sought a way back to the best place: the forest. We understood that people could only return if they were assured of survival, otherwise it wouldn't work. And the attraction

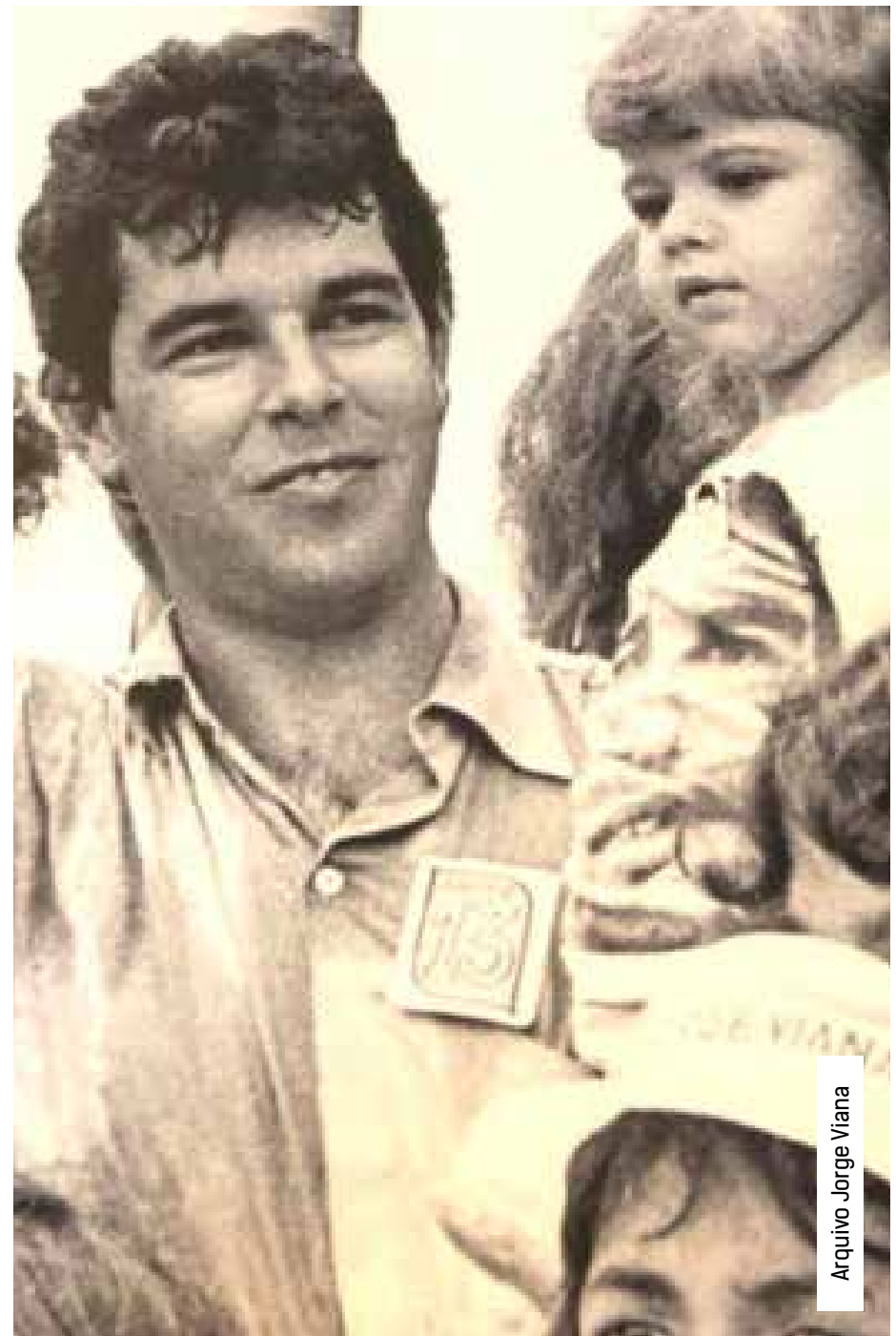


of remuneration for Extractivist products was our great ally in this process. Another very strong event was Marina's own mandate, combined with our government. It was through a joint effort between Marina's cabinet and the Acre government and the social movements, led by the CUT, which at the time was chaired by Sibá Machado, that we led the Bank of the Amazon [Banco da Amazônia] to create the first lines of credit for extractivist activities, in a really, really big fight. The president of the bank herself asked for our help in convincing her board. In my defense, I used an argument that worked. I said: "Look, you're not famous today (the Bank at the time was BASA and I said that the Bank couldn't be BASA, that it had to be Bank of the Amazon, because Amazon was a strong name), but if you approve this loan, you'll become famous, you'll be featured in the New York Times. Now, if you continue to give credit only to cattle ranching, only to unsustainable activities, you'll continue to be just BASA. To become the Bank of the Amazon, you need to start a new journey." When they approved the credit, they were published in the New York Times. BASA became Banco da Amazônia as a result of the investment they made in our ideas. In government, we dared from day one, not always as quickly as we wanted, but we dared. Everything had to be done very quickly, but it took us three months to define the government's brand: me, Toinho Alves and Binho Marques, who was our marketeer. We defined "Government of the Forest" as the government's brand, in a first paradigm shift, a first institutional choice for the forest, an option that nobody had the courage to make before. We also decided that, for us, the focus had to be on the forest, using the tree as a symbol of the government, always from an economic point of view, and Binho did the design, with Toinho improving it. I chose the tree to represent the forest. At home, we were accused of making a government for the animals, for the monkeys, for the jaguars. But the external repercussions were very good and then, slowly, we overcame the internal resistance. For more than half of the eight years I was in office, I had to live with the same

demands about why we should have a Forest Government. But this was a concrete sign of our permanent commitment to working with the forest as our richest asset, placing regional culture and traditional knowledge as a comparative advantage. We had no doubt that this was the way forward. Since then, Brazilian laws have been increasingly adjusted in this direction. And we continue to fight for the focus in the Amazon to be less and less on the land and more and more on the forest, because we know that as long as the focus is on the land we're going to have problems, because to get to the land you have to remove what's on top of it. With the focus on land, we're going to have land grabbing and speculation. To translate this new idea of ours, we created the concept we call Florestania [Forest Citizenship]. Brazil had just elected its first governors after more than 20 years of dictatorship; the magic word was democracy, as an important instrument for achieving citizenship [cidadania]. In Acre, we went further. We invented Florestania as a form of citizenship for the peoples of the Amazon. We also believe that those who govern the Amazon cannot work with the bureaucratic concept of administration. A government that is committed to the ideals of Chico Mendes cannot be administrated, because a dream cannot be administrated. A region, an environment, a history like ours cannot be administrated, it has to be looked after. So, we introduced the idea of taking care of and not administrating, which completes the concept of Florestania. I had the privilege of spending time with Chico for the last three years of his life. I spent a lot of time with him and saw him negotiating projects and discussing budgets, with people from embassies, with the BNDES (National Bank for Economic and Social Development). In fact, the BNDES was the first bank to finance the Xapuri Cooperative, which at the time was a mix of union and cooperative, through a project we did at FUNTAC (Acre State Technology Foundation), with Gomercindo writing, Toinho and Macêdo helping. Gil Siqueira was the main coordinator of this project. Terri was also very important, especially for the indigenous part.



They elaborated a bold project, and the BNDES provided bold funding, which generated a strong reaction from the Acre state government. At the time, the boss/employee model was breaking down, with rubber tappers fighting for their labor autonomy. The idea of creating cooperatives emerged. At the time, there was already talk of interference by the gringos in the Amazon, but the foreigner here in the region was always national capital, because it never showed up. The union had no support, no credit lines, nothing. So, when some embassy donated a little bit of money, it was seen as foreign intervention. But the project ended up going ahead and it included a truck for Xapuri. And it was this truck, bought with the money from the BNDES project, that gave Chico another day of life. A few days before he died, Chico arrived from Rio de Janeiro. He was at my office and I asked him very strongly not to go to Xapuri. He said there was no deal, that he was going home. Nobody wanted him to go, not the people from Rio de Janeiro, not the people from Rio Branco, not even the people from Xapuri. But Chico missed the children and had such passion for Ilzamar. Christmas was coming and he decided to go home. Chico didn't say, but it was clear that he wanted to face that situation. I told him that he had to stay in Rio Branco because the truck had arrived, it was being serviced and he had to take it. Then Chico's face lit up, he changed his mind and stayed waiting for the truck. The next day, Chico took the truck and went to Xapuri. When he got there, he filled the truck with children, drove around the city and let off firecrackers to celebrate his and the Movement's greatest achievement. The truck was going to break the cycle of exploitation, because with it the rubber tappers were going to be able to take their products out of the forest, they were going to be able to take food to their homes without going through the boss's shed. So, the fact is that he lived another day because of that blessed truck.



Arquivo Jorge Viana



LÚCIO FLÁVIO PINTO

I traveled through Acre and Rondônia for the first time in 1981. To express my impressions allegorically at the end of 19 intense days, I could say that the stage was being set for the confrontation between God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun, taking Glauber Rocha's movie as a motto. I talked to people from all over the country. I also talked to locals who were hoping to leave their isolation and poverty to enjoy the sharing of national goods at a banquet to which they had never been invited. After a lot of talking and observing, however, it was possible to feel that tension that precedes storms. Chico Mendes, with an international name, could have done much more for his people and his land. But, on the eve of Christmas 1988, his path was interrupted by bullets – two, sharp, announced ones. I reacted with several articles, published in my "Personal Journal" (which continues to this day), in the first half of January 1989. Among the excerpts from the main article: In October last year, Francisco Alves Mendes Filho confessed to American journalist Fay Haussman: "For us, until recently, the term environment didn't even exist." A few weeks later, on his 44th birthday, he became the first hero of the martyred ecological struggle in the Amazon. There has never been a more announced death than this in the Amazon. Nor more shocking. People deeply moved by the confirmation of his death, which was expected and feared by all, had the same reaction in São Paulo, Belém, London or New York: was it really impossible to avoid the threat? The plot is broadly in line with all these types of attacks that are carried out with increasingly frightening frequency in the Amazon. It was probably no coincidence that rancher João Branco, president of the UDR in Acre, left Rio Branco in a chartered air cab. Branco, who has a newspaper at his disposal in the Acre capital and is setting up a television station, got ahead of everyone by announcing Darcy Alves da Silva's surrender, hours before it happened. He defined his situation as that of "a cornered ox". He forgot one addition: piranha bull [akin to sacrificial lamb]. The biggest police mobilization of all time to capture the murderers of a rural leader concluded that the attack began and ended with the Alves da Silva family. These are typical crimes of enforcers,

of those who do not go beyond an intermediate position in the hierarchy of power. Brasília may sacrifice these remote rings of the alliance, but the Alves da Silva in Xapuri, like the Murads in the Lower Araguaia of Pará or the Wirlands in the Middle Tapajós, are in charge of the police chiefs and are partners with the authorities. When they are in trouble, the public force becomes a private militia at their service. Chico is the unique expression of a caboclo who has found an efficient way to fight for his convictions – the defense of the trees of the forest, a stronghold of competence and knowledge accumulated over the years. In many parts of the world, respectable names have come to this conclusion by following intellectual paths that are much more complicated and much less intense. For the local power system, fueled by violence, things were perfectly clear there. On the one hand, an emblem of the alliance: the farmer, who came from outside to tame the "frontier"; on the other, the stubborn native, who stands in the way of the determinism of the "model". The choice between the two parties is imposed from outside. Everything there was absolutely federalized between 1977 and 1987. Talking about authoritarianism in this case is more than philosophy. One suspects that Military Police Corporal Roldão Roseno de Souza, 26, and Private Roldão Lucas da Cruz, 27, would not have had the natural carelessness shown if, instead of a rubber tapper, the person being protected had been a landowner. The rubber tapper will always be referred to as the "individual", even if he is internationally recognized.

"The struggle in Pará and throughout the Amazon continues and is similar in many ways to the struggle in Acre and its star leader: Chico Mendes, who, although he lost his life, continues to serve as a model for our journey in pursuit of our ideals."

Antonia Melo

The rancher will never lose the treatment of “doctor”. In a letter dated October 28 to the Acre Secretary of Public Security and the judge of Xapuri, Chico Mendes denounced that in Brasília “secret meetings have been taking place for more than ten days”, in which the assassination of himself and the president of the rural union of that municipality was being planned. He was ignored. The superintendent of the Federal Police in Acre, Mauro Spósito, withheld an arrest warrant for Darly and Alvarino for 15 days. He claimed that the letter was formally incorrect, giving the brothers time to escape. Spósito was suddenly reassigned to Mato Grosso, tasked with dealing with drug trafficking, a traditional corporate way of solving problems by circumventing them. The rancher Gastão Mota, suspected of brokering the rubber tapper’s murder and of having links to arms and drug trafficking, was arrested on the Bolivian border, but released on New Year’s Eve. “I didn’t have the legal tools, like an arrest warrant, to keep him in jail,” explained police chief Nilson Alves de Oliveira. The extreme respect for legal formality in this case would be touching if it weren’t one-sided. Impunity does not allow us to forget that violence is the hallmark of the Amazon frontier – and that it consumes it with its logic of irrationality. “There are more people – and important people – who wanted to kill Chico Mendes and that’s why the investigations must go deeper,” requested the judge of Xapuri, Adair Longhini. But the investigations only seem to follow the straight line, not the dotted line. The same IDB that listened to Chico Mendes granted two loans to Brazil in 1985, worth 58.5 million dollars, to partially finance the BR-364, the Porto Velho–Rio Branco stretch. But they wanted the Project for the Protection of the Environment and Indigenous Communities [PMACI], conceived by Chico Mendes, to be carried out. In ten years, with the road being paved, Rondônia has lost 25% of its forests, and Acre 10%. The IDB wants investment and utopia, a combination that only happens in New York – and mentally. Chico Mendes really wanted to live. But combining the two – the defense of ideas and the right to life – is definitively abolished in the Amazonian hell sanctioned by the new owners of the land.



LUIZ CEPPI

The first feeling I have towards Chico Mendes is that of human compassion. He had such compassion; he had the desire to bring everyone together in a great alliance, involving the whole of society, to build a life that didn't depend on the government, on the so-called central part of the colonialist regime that existed. I remember a meeting in Rio Branco where Chico was there, along with people from the army, the SNI (National Information Service), Ibama, various political parties, rubber tappers and other organizations, and Chico managed, in one night, to get everyone to agree on the same thing – if we destroy the forest, we destroy our lives and, by destroying our lives, we destroy humanity. Chico's thinking about the forest was not simply an economic concept, but a concept of life. The Extractivist Reserve was born as a very strong proposal. It was born to value the ancient cultures of the indigenous peoples and also the culture of more than 100 years of the rubber tappers, who had arrived with the idea of exploring and integrated themselves into this forest. Chico started an Alliance, which was consolidated in 1989, shortly after his death, when Júlio Barbosa made the Peoples of the Forest Alliance official, with the exchange of symbols between rubber tappers and indigenous peoples. Chico never distanced himself from his people. When he organized the PT, when he accompanied the São Bernardo strikes, the re-democratization, there was a deep connection between what he did and the lives of our people. Chico was always linked to his family, to the rubber tappers, in this deep bond between citizenship and representation. When he came back from Washington, he didn't let it get to him. I think that's what we need to rediscover: that true liberation is born to the extent that we don't remain equal but, together with the people who live in need, manage to dream and hope for a new world, a more open life. After the mass on September 7, 1988, on the Cachoeira rubber plantation, we went together to Brasília and, on the way, he asked me, "Luiz, if I die, can I still talk to my children?" This shows a human side

that we put aside in our ideologies, in our enthusiasm. I said, "Chico, of course, physically you won't be able to put your hand on Sandino's face anymore, or put Elenira on your lap, but you'll talk to them in a different way." His concern in experiencing human feelings on a daily basis led Chico to become a man who made it very clear: "I don't want to die, I want to live!" A cry from someone who loved life. He dreamed of a free world, a plentiful table and, above all, he had faith in a better life in the forest.

"I hope that one day we will have a fairer humanity with more solidarity, one that can understand and work to carry on the legacy of Chico Mendes."



Comité Chico Mendes



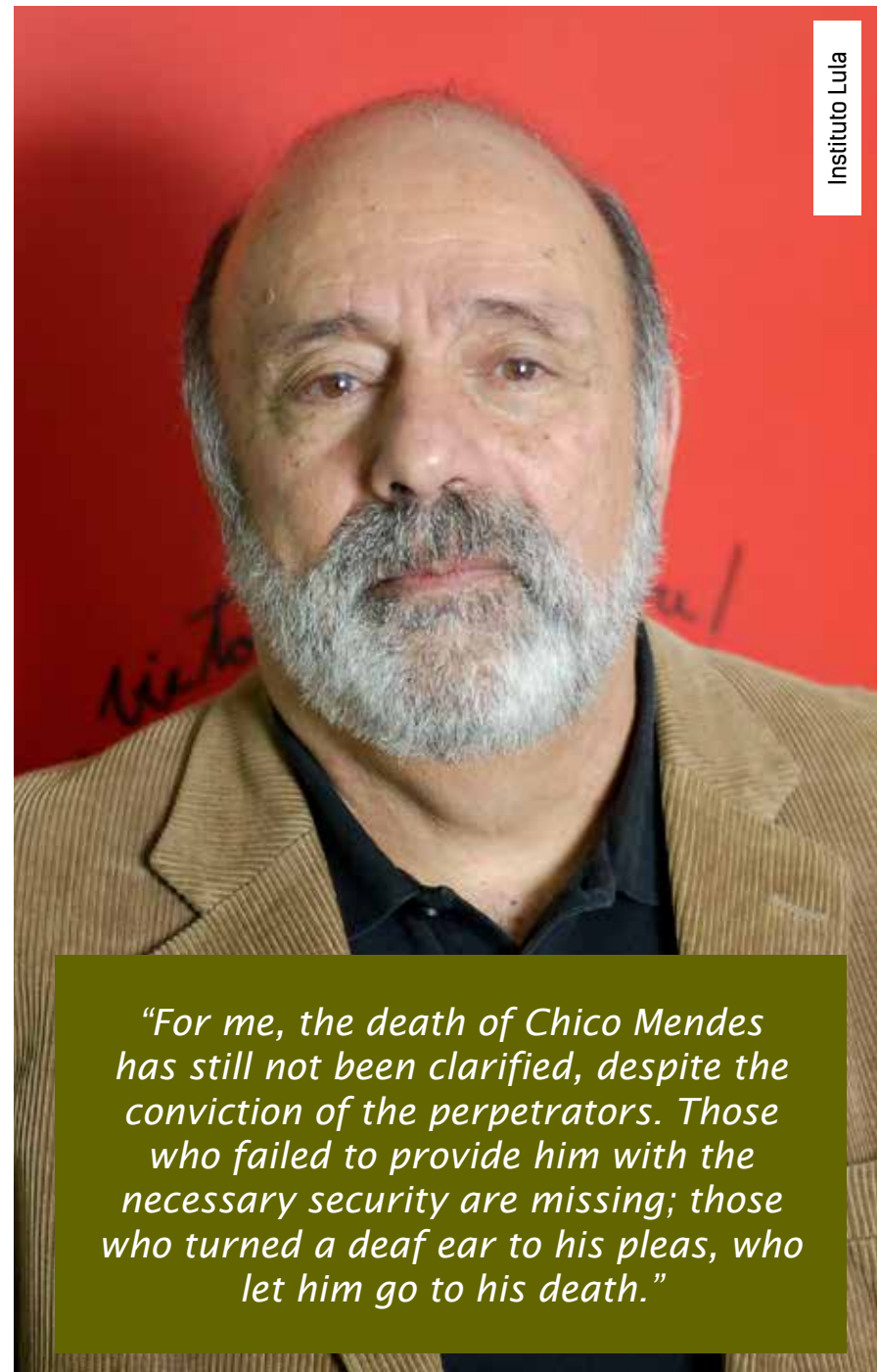


Comité Chico Mendes

OS FARÁ RECORD

LUIZ EDUARDO GREENHALGH

The old-timers say that once you've been friends for a while, you can no longer remember when it began. No matter how hard I try, I can't pinpoint when I first met Chico Mendes. I think it was at a meeting of the National Directorate, at the very beginning of the PT. I can't forget him: a calm way of speaking, a penetrating gaze, wily, sharp. We talked about Acre, about Plácido de Castro's epic, about the standoffs. He wanted to transform society as part of his mission on Earth. But it was in 1980, after the murder of Wilson Pinheiro, president of the Brasília Rural Workers' Union, who was executed inside the Union, that we became closer. On July 27, the official launch of the PT in Acre took place, with the presence of Lula, Jacó Bittar and Chico Mendes, among many other comrades. After the launch, we went to Brasília to take part in a public demonstration in repudiation of Wilson Pinheiro's murder. More than 30 people spoke. The police repression recorded the speeches, picked out phrases and used them to open a case, based on the National Security Law, against Jacó Bittar, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, José Francisco da Silva, Francisco Alves Mendes Filho [Chico] and João Maia da Silva Filho, all [of them accused] of inciting crime, for the speeches they made in Brasília. It's worth remembering the phrases that led them to the bars of military justice: Jacó Bittar: "(...) the workers will know how to respond to the murder of Wilson de Souza Pinheiro (...) we will conquer [our rights] with our struggle, because all those who produce have the right to participate, both socially and politically, in this country (...) we have full confidence that through conscious organization, through the Union, we will really conquer everything that is due to us, comrades..." Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva: "(...) those who killed Wilson Pinheiro, perhaps, as a comrade said at the start of this conversation, I wish there was a scout here to inform you – and it's good that you're here and carry the following message: the Brazilian working class is already tired of promises, it's already tired of going hungry, it's already tired of running away and it's already tired of dying. The Brazilian working class is not going to accept running away or dying. It's going

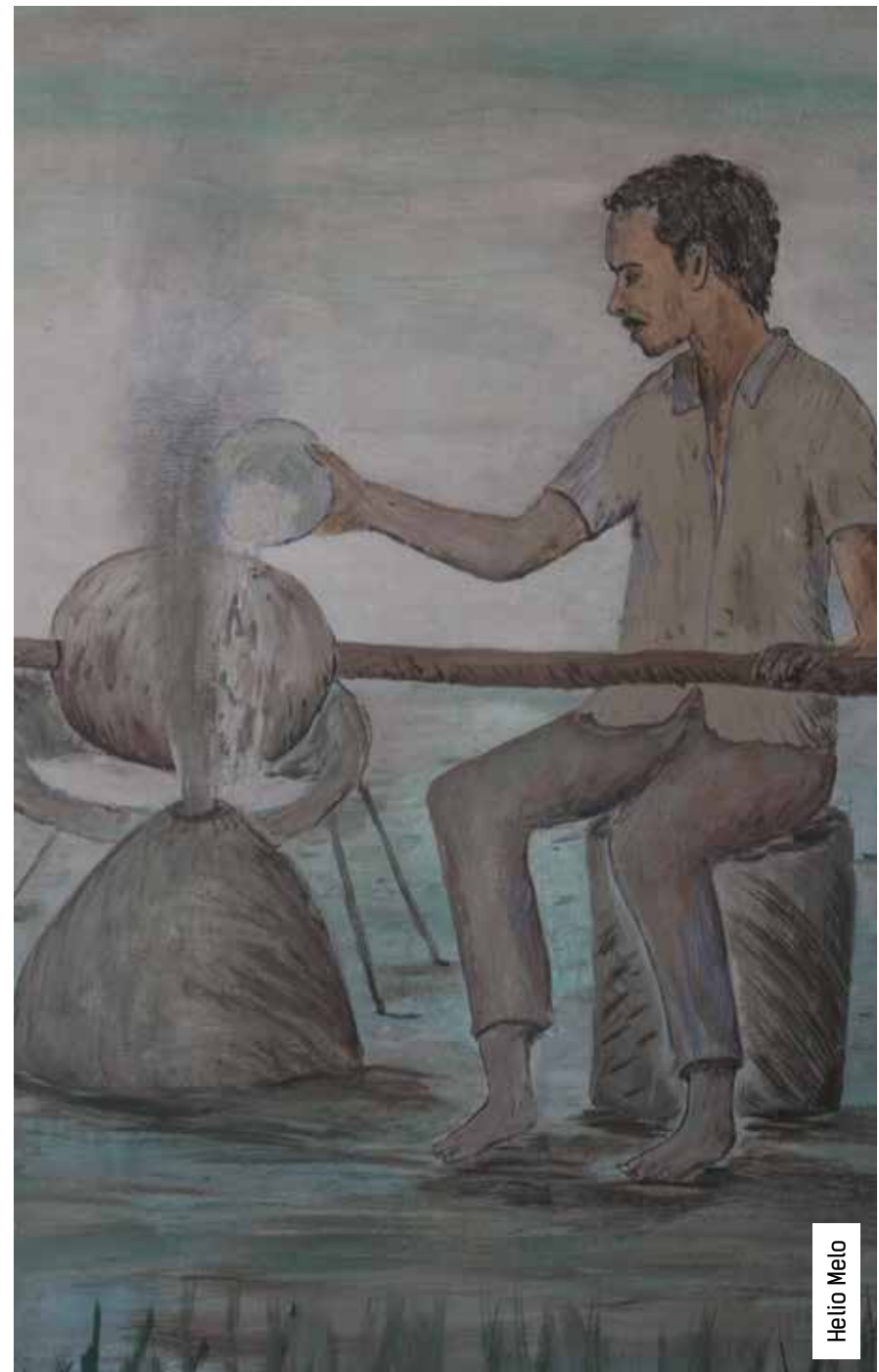


Instituto Lula

"For me, the death of Chico Mendes has still not been clarified, despite the conviction of the perpetrators. Those who failed to provide him with the necessary security are missing; those who turned a deaf ear to his pleas, who let him go to his death."



to start giving back what it's been given in return." Chico Mendes said that he was speaking as a representative of the Center for the Defense of Human Rights of Xapuri and not as a councilman, and the phrase that put him on the docket was that Wilson Pinheiro's blood would not go unpunished. The investigation was presided over by police chief Mauro Spósito, from the Federal Police, at the Military Audit Office in Manaus. I defended Lula, Jacó Bittar and Chico Mendes, although he had his own lawyer. Every time I went to Acre during the Inquiry, I talked with Chico Mendes. A few days after Wilson Pinheiro's death, Nilo Sergio de Oliveira, or Nilão, was murdered, and was thought to be one of those responsible for Wilson's death. The trial came quickly. They concluded that Nilão's death was the result of the speeches in Brasília. According to the indictment, the accused had incited collective disobedience to the law and fomented violence between social classes. This case was a lot of work, but it brought me closer to my comrades in Acre who were fighting for human rights, respect for rubber tappers and the forest. And Chico, with whom I had the closest relationship. They were all acquitted in the Manaus Military Audit. After the trial, I received a gift from Chico: two engravings by Helio Melo on the rubber cycle. Today, I look back and see how far we've come before we put one of us in charge of the country. I miss the comrades who gave their lives so that we could get to where we are. I can't come to terms with the death of Chico Mendes. A death that had been foreseen, announced, premeditated and expected. When Chico informed the authorities of the death threats he was receiving, why didn't they take action? Why didn't the federal marshals in the region, who were eager to form the inquiry into the public act repudiating Wilson Pinheiro's death, act with the same speed when it came to guaranteeing Chico Mendes' life?

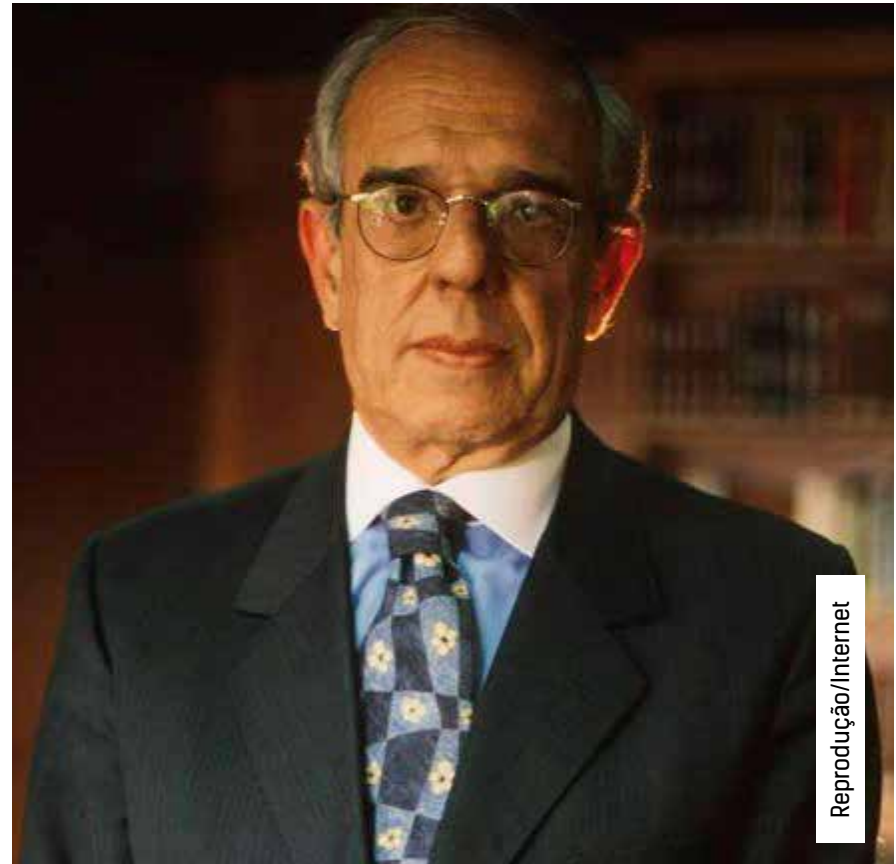


Helio Melo



MÁRCIO THOMAZ BASTOS

When Chico Mendes died, I was President of the Federal Council of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB). We mobilized to show solidarity to the family and the Movement. The OAB felt it was important to help in the process, so we got power of attorney from the family, set up a team and joined the case as assistant prosecutors. We got to work, with several law firms, several lawyers, following all the steps. We didn't miss a single hearing; we attended them all. I myself went to Acre several times. The trial was exciting, very exciting. It's always good for a lawyer to feel that public opinion is on the side of the victim he's defending. On the day of the jury, we went to Xapuri and held the trial, which lasted a week. I don't think we got everyone, a lot of people were left out, but that result was the best we could achieve in the circumstances. I had the feeling that I was fulfilling my duty as a citizen and as a lawyer at the same time. It was an unforgettable week, mainly because I had the hope that we were setting a standard of justice there, since, really, by national standards, the trial happened very quickly, in less than two years. Unfortunately, this was an exception that didn't change the rule, because justice for the poor is still very slow. I think it was international pressure that ended up making the trial go a little faster. Then there were appeals and I stayed on the case until the sentence was confirmed. We convicted the murderer and the mastermind. Justice was done, but not total justice. On a purely personal level, I made friends with Acre, with Acre citizens, with simple people. I strengthened bonds of friendship with many people, such as President Lula himself, who went to Acre to attend the trial. Today, after so many years, what I would like is for the speed of the Xapuri trial, in honor of the memory and legacy of Chico Mendes, to be the rule and not the exception.

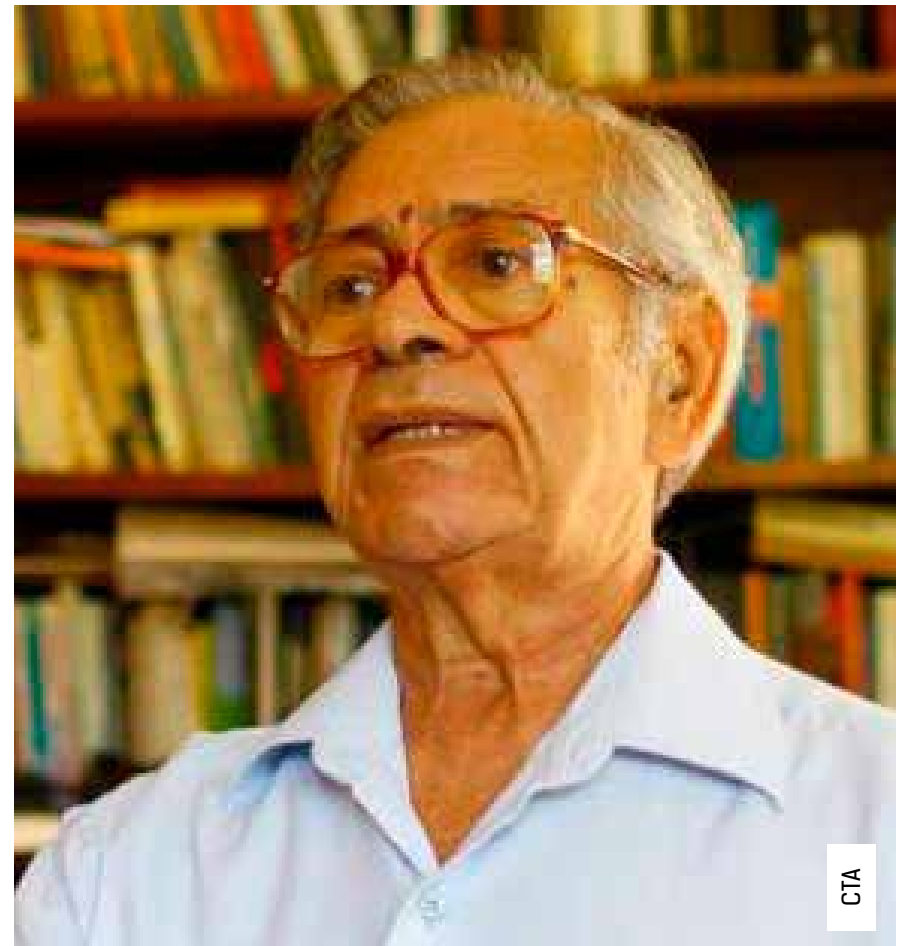


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"In the case of Chico Mendes' murder, we managed to convict a murderer and a mastermind fairly quickly. I just wish that this victory, albeit partial, because we know we haven't caught everyone, could be extended to all cases of violence in the countryside, where trials take too long and thus open the way for more threats, more violence, more murders. "

MODESTO DA SILVEIRA

I met Chico Mendes in person a short while before his assassination. I saw a man who was idealistic, serious, sensitive and intelligent. Shortly after his murder, in 1988, there were more threats in Acre, which seemed to be a methodical organization because, even before Chico Mendes' death, other leaders had already been murdered in the Amazon. It was at this moment of desperation that I was invited by the rubber tapper leaders, via Rosa Roldán, to go to Rio Branco and Xapuri. In Acre, I talked to the leaders, learned about the reality and made a defense plan for those who were marked for death, including Osmarino Amâncio, Gomercindo Rodrigues, Júlio Barbosa, Raimundão [Raimundo Barros], Dom Moacyr Grechi. Our defense plan, based on the strategy already adopted by Chico Mendes, was as follows: we interviewed the threatened leaders and asked each of them to tell us where the danger was coming from. In this plan, they had to give the names of the suspects and possibly their executors, with details of the facts and motivations. Once this was done, copies would be deposited with reliable and safe entities or personalities. This preventive defense would be made public. The leaders could give full and complete publicity to the plan, in order to discourage the assassins. After that, none of the leaders already listed for death were assassinated. Finally, I'd like to tell you a little story: When Chico came to Rio, he stayed at Rosa Roldán's house. Chico was very intelligent, but with a certain degree of rubber tapper naivety. On his last visit, just before Christmas, he saw a constellation of stars on the ceiling of his room every time he turned off the light. The next morning, there were no more constellations on the ceiling, just the plain white ceiling of any apartment. At breakfast, he asked his friend Rosa about the phenomenon. She then went into the bedroom with him and showed him discreet little stars, invisible in the daylight but shining brightly in the dark. Today we can say that that invisible ceiling, only idealized, can become a beautiful reality in the dark of night for so many ignorant minds.



"My time with Chico Mendes was an experience of coming into contact with an enlightened person. He always did everything with humor, offering every gesture to a higher cause, which made him an extremely fair, honest and beautiful person."

João Augusto Fortes



RAIMUNDA BEZERRA DA SILVA

I'm Raimunda Bezerra, born in Brasiléia, where I left when I was seven. I consider myself a Rio Branco citizen because my entire personal, professional and activist life has been in Rio Branco. In the 1970s and 1980s, I was a member of the Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (CEBs). During my activism, I met Chico Mendes, who at the time was a councilman for the Popular Front of the Brazilian Democratic Movement [MDB political party]. At the time, I spent six months in Rio de Janeiro. From there, talking to the people of Acre, I heard from Nilson Mourão: "Look, everything has changed here. We left the MDB and now we're going to São Paulo to take part in the founding of the PT." That was in 1980. When I returned to Acre, I joined the PT and began to have more contact with Chico: a contact [based on] the world of politics, of party activism, but between us a great friendship was born. My house became the place where Chico stayed in Rio Branco. They would come and spend two or three days. It was a bit like a continuation of the union. This relationship with Chico was strongest from 1983 until his murder in 1988. From the beginning, I followed the process of creating and strengthening the union. It was after the standoffs and the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers in Brasília (1985), where the proposal for Extractivist Reserves was launched and the CNS was created, that Acre began to attract the attention of the Environmental Movement. Because of this, Chico is better known as an environmentalist than as a trade unionist, although his fight in defense of the forest began in the Union. Over time, other elements and another understanding were incorporated into this process. The demand

"It was a mistake for those who thought that killing Chico would put an end to the Movement's strength. It was a profound blow, but the repercussions were so great that it gave the Movement the chance to remake itself, rebuild itself, rethink itself. Of course, the Movement is no longer the same, Acre has taken a different path and so have we. What hasn't changed is the great nostalgia we feel for Chico."

for schools and health centers on the rubber plantations began. Before that, there was already the Rubber Tapper Project [Projeto Seringueiro], coordinated by the Amazon Workers' Center (CTA). It was financed by International Cooperation. I can't say which one, but there was already a lot of international cooperation here. For example, we in Human Rights were funded by Action Aid and Oxfam. When Chico himself died he had an Ashoka grant. It was three months before his death that he began to receive financial support to support himself, because he had no income and no way of making an income. It was his friends who were committed to helping him, from milk for the children to cigarettes. Like any other activist, this also brought personal and family difficulties for Chico. Like any woman, his wife had aspirations to have a house, a television. This was difficult for him. The support of his friends helped him to resolve these issues a little. Chico was not a being outside of life. He was a man who had his family and didn't give up his personal life because he was a strong activist. It was very difficult for him to reconcile all of this. Everything is very cruel about Chico's death, but one of the things I saw in him was a bit of a change in the macho man who was modernizing, leaving behind the concept that the woman should take care of the children, the house, while the man stayed in the Movement. Sometimes he would come to Rio Branco and bring Elenira, who would stay with me while he held his meetings. He was already doing a bit of this, which was a big change for a rubber tapper. He, a man from the rubber plantation, the son of northeasterners, a man who worked outside but not at home,



was experiencing these changes. Unfortunately, Chico was not allowed to live the experiences of a man who understood the workers' struggle, but who also sought to be more complete and more committed to the other dimensions of life, such as being a father. Elenira and Sandino were very young, and the time he spent with them was taken away from him with great brutality. Chico was very generous. Everyone talks about him politically, so I like to talk about him as a person. That scene of him sitting on the floor and feeding Sandino is very real. In the midst of the turbulence of the political struggle, in the midst of a confrontation in which he couldn't say where he was, Chico found time to sit on the floor with the children, to feed his son. To kill someone like that, because of economic interests, was an act of violence beyond measure. 35 years on, I still can't forget it. During his last days, I was ill, and I didn't even see him dead. He came home, Paulo, my husband, wasn't there, so he said: "I can't go away and leave you like this!" Then I said: "Are you worried? Do you know where my father lives? Then go and get my father and bring him here." He went and got my father. Chico never said goodbye, whenever I saw him, he had already left. That day he said goodbye, wished everyone a Merry Christmas and then hit the road. That was the last time I saw him. About 20 days before the murder, he and Raimundo Barros were sleeping over when he was called to go to Sena Madureira. Contrary to plan, neither he nor Raimundo slept over that night. Raimundo traveled to São Paulo and Chico to Sena Madureira. The next morning, we noticed that two towels had disappeared from the laundry area. When we looked, we saw that the towels were near the fence and that there were traces of men's shoes and a pack of cigarettes of the same brand as the cigarette that was found in the ambush that killed him. In other words, the gunmen spent the night in the backyard of my house. Chico's brother lived on the other side of the street from my house and his sister-in-law lives there to this day. When Chico slept over, he would get up early, open the door, cross the street to have coffee with his brother, and the gunmen probably knew this

routine. If he had slept here that night, he could have died in my house. We didn't realize there had been a hideout, we thought he was a common thief. We only realized it a long time later because of the Marlboro cigarette the gunman was smoking. It was probably the same gunman. In recent times, Chico was being followed by the police and when he slept at the house, the stubborn man always slept in a hammock near the window, so that if someone shot him, they would hit him right in the head.



CTA





Every time we saw this, either Paulo or I would turn his head the other way, because if someone shot him, it would hit him in the foot. Once he left a note for me at the CTA, saying that he'd been followed all afternoon, that he was in a cab and that he was going to try to go home because it was a safe place. When he arrived, he left the gate open, the door open and went to the bathroom. Then he had a coffee, lit a cigarette and said: "Mate, today was a tough day. The guys followed me around the corner, luckily I managed to dodge them." Then I said: "How come you didn't say anything to me, you come in here, you leave everything open... and if these guys come in and kill you in my bathroom, what am I going to do with my life?" He was like that. I don't know if he was aware of it, but he was tense. When he made a letter telling me who the people who took part in the meeting deciding to kill him were, he gave it to me to read. To this day I regret not having made a greater effort to prevent that letter from being published. I read the letter and said: "Do you think it should be published?" Then he said: "I'm going to go for all or nothing, I'm going to say what I know and see what happens." I said: "I don't think you should, if you want my opinion on it." He said: "No, I gave you the letter to read just to check the Portuguese mistakes." Then I said: "The Portuguese mistakes in that letter are the least of it, it's the content that's the problem." That same day I asked him if he thought it would be good to go to Goiás or somewhere else. He said: "Goiás and Mato Grosso are UDR lands, if I go there, I'll be protected from what?" He always said: "They'll say I've run away, that I'm abandoning the people's struggle, the comrades." I said: "It's not abandoning, it's protecting!" But he thought it was an escape and he didn't agree. He was very convinced of his role in the social struggle. I don't know if he believed he was going to be shot like that.



Acervo Comitê Chico Mendes



ROSA ROLDÁN

I met Chico Mendes in Rio de Janeiro in 1987, through two fellow geographers from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), who were working in Acre. Curious about the constant articles published in the local newspapers, they went to Assis Brasil to attend a meeting organized by Chico between indigenous people and rubber tappers. They became friends with him and, taking advantage of Chico's visit to Rio de Janeiro after a trip abroad, they invited him to give a talk at the Pontifical Catholic University [PUC-Rio]. In that lecture, he moved us with his first stories, awakening the desire to do something to help him in his fight to save the rubber trees, the Amazon rainforest and, in Chico's own mind, humanity. According to him, this help was very important, otherwise the story wouldn't get out of Acre. We then founded the Committee to Support the Peoples of the Forest and began to make political connections with academia and the press to put Chico Mendes in the national spotlight. During 1988, we managed to bring him to Rio and take him to São Paulo many times, not only to publicize his ideas, but also to ask for solidarity with his struggle in Acre against the violence of the latifundia, and to denounce the death threats he and his comrades were constantly suffering. On December 9, Chico Mendes came to Rio to give a talk at the Paço Imperial [historic building]. I was warned by comrades from the Committee who were working in Rio Branco that the rumors about his death were only growing, and that the latifundio's promise was to eliminate him before 1988 was over. I redoubled my care for him here in Rio, just in case. Very apprehensively, I put Chico on a plane to Rio Branco on the 10th. On my way back from the airport, I decided to go for a walk on the beach. I was very distressed. When I returned home, Chico had come back from the airport, unable to board. The plane stalled, glided for half an hour and made a forced landing. I asked him to take it as a warning, even though I don't consider



CTA



myself superstitious. As if that wasn't enough, we received a phone call from the Movement's lawyer in Rio Branco, asking Chico not to come back. Then we heard that farmers had gathered in Brasília to vote on his death by the end of that year. We couldn't convince Chico to stay in Rio de Janeiro. He claimed that he wouldn't abandon the struggle or his comrades, even though he knew he could die. On the 11th, I put him on a plane to Acre for the last time. I didn't want to say goodbye crying. Jokingly, I gave him a hug for his birthday, which would be a few days away, on December 15, saying that he was going to die of old age, just to counteract the bad omens that kept coming. He looked at me smiling and said: "You don't know how to lie properly, buddy." Eleven days later, he was murdered at the back door of his house in Xapuri. I received the news by phone a few minutes after his death. I didn't have time to cry. We spent the whole of the early hours of the 22nd publicizing the crime to the national and international media and phoning friends and allies. I didn't want to go to the funeral to keep my image of him alive. Our work to get his murderers convicted was not easy. We had to keep the flame burning, inform the Brazilian and foreign press, investigate complaints, strategize with the lawyers. We partially succeeded in seeing justice done, punishing the murderer and a mastermind of the crime. However, we knew that, in addition to them, the Rural Democratic Union (UDR) and its political allies were involved in the murder plot. The positive outcome of our fight against impunity meant that in the following years, no comrades from the Movement were murdered in Acre. The greatest tribute we can pay not only to him, but to all those who gave their lives for a piece of land – fighting for justice, a better life and respect for nature – is to continue with their struggles. For those of us who believe this, the Chicos Mendes who have fallen all over this country will live on.



CTA

"The image I have of Chico is that of a very politically lucid person, charismatic, sweet and always open to dialogue, but firm in his actions and convinced of his goals: the fight against the latifundia, for social justice and in defense of the forest and the people who live in it."



SUELI BELLATO



“That shot fired in Xapuri went beyond the borders of the Amazon, reached consciences and forged commitments to the ideals of Chico Mendes all over planet Earth.”

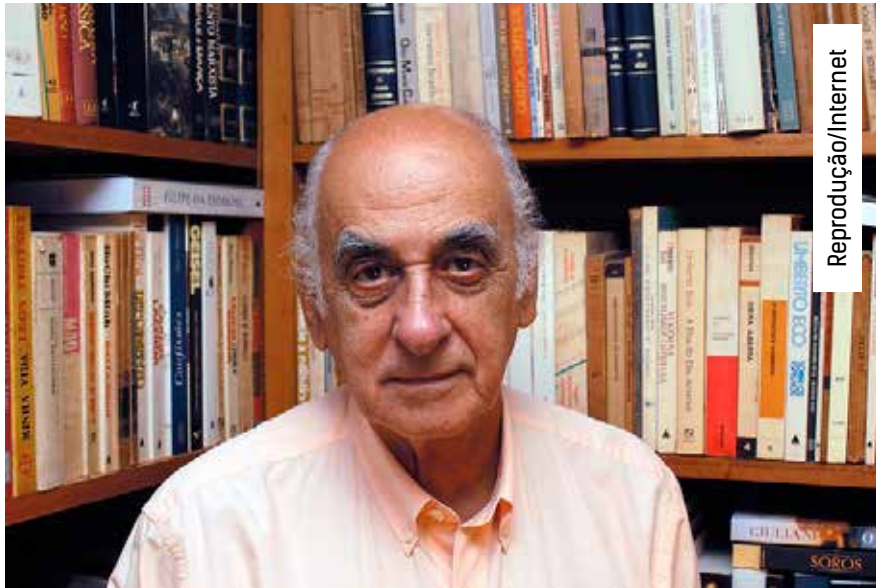
It was almost Christmas Eve. The rural workers of Xapuri now had a yellow truck to help transport their Brazil nut, rubber and Extractivist products and, to strengthen the union, economic and cultural organization of their communities. A tour of the city with the new truck, obtained through the BNDES, full of children, was Chico Mendes' way of celebrating the victories achieved in 1988. Before dinner, to relax, a pleasant game of dominoes and a good bath with the right to use the new towel, a gift from his last birthday on December 15th. There was a farewell tone in the air, just as there was during his recent visit to friends in Piracicaba and Rio de Janeiro. The feeling that the siege was closing in seemed stronger for Chico, a feeling that was not shared even by some of his close friends – after all, would anyone have the courage to end the life of such a leader? I knew little about Chico Mendes during his lifetime. I met him during the 3rd CONCURT, in Belo Horizonte, in 1988, where I was impressed by his capacity for articulation. A representative of rural workers, coming from a region far from the center of union decision-making and with such resourcefulness. My task at the Congress was to present the trade unionists threatened with death to the international delegates, so that they could try to prevent the threats from being carried out. It wasn't easy to hold Chico Mendes back, because he was more interested in working with the delegates to get the Extractivist Reserves thesis approved than talking about the death threats he was receiving. In the end, Chico took part in the Act during the Congress and told the delegates that his fight in favor of projects to preserve the sustainability of the Amazon was under threat from landowners and politicians in the region. He also said that, although they accused him of wanting to lock up the forest, he was actually defending rational production, especially Extractivist production. He denounced the lack of action by the state and the impunity of those responsible for the murders of his comrades, including Wilson Pinheiro and Ivair Higino. Finally, in the midst of a gathering of more than 1,500 trade unionists, the vast majority of whom were urban and unfamiliar

with the reality of the Amazon, Chico and his comrades celebrated the approval of his name for the Central's Board of Directors, and the victory of the approval of his thesis, with the CUT at the 3rd CONCUR having assumed in its Resolutions the defense of Extractivist Reserves. Chico also recognized the importance of the space set aside during the Congress for delegates to denounce threats to the environment and to their own lives. A few days later, Chico wrote a letter to us, from the Sector for Combating Violence in the Countryside, giving more details of the threats, his requests for protection, his measures and told us about the contribution of the lawyer from Paraná, Dr. Genésio de Natividade, who was helping to defend the interests of the Peoples of the Forests. Three months after the Congress, a few days before Christmas, Chico was ambushed and died when he was shot by an assassin. At the request of the Board of Directors, I went to Acre on Christmas Eve to take the first legal steps. On that occasion, I personally met Dr. Genésio and the late Cesário, who worked courageously in that region where the law of the strongest came out of the barrels of revolvers and institutions were not respected. The barbaric and cowardly crime committed against someone totally prevented from taking any action to defend himself did not silence the defender of the interests of the peoples of the forest; on the contrary, his voice gained a volume and reach never before imagined. It was the beginning of a new dialogue, a new Alliance with the Peoples of the Forest, in which I modestly include myself. The trial of two of the defendants accused of the murder of Francisco Alves Mendes Filho began on December 15, 2000 and the Sentencing Council proclaimed the end of impunity for those who kill and order murders in Acre. It is also sad to remember that other trade unionists who were with Chico Mendes at the 3rd CONCUR were also murdered, such as Expedito Ribeiro, murdered on February 2, 1990, in Rio Maria.



OS FARÁ RECORD

ZUENIR VENTURA



The country that produced some of the most famous Olympic and Dionysian myths of this century – Pelé, Tom Jobim, Ayrton Senna and Ronaldinho – also created a tragic hero and turned him into the protomartyr of the ecological cause. A man who had to die to be known in his homeland. He was already, as The New York Times wrote, “a symbol of the entire planet”. In fact, it was the rubber tapper Chico Mendes who mobilized not only Brazil but also the world to defend the Amazon rainforest, for which he would eventually give his life. Certain that he was about to die, he not only denounced the plot, but thought he would die in vain: “If an envoy came down from heaven and assured me that my death would strengthen our struggle, it would be worth it. But a public act and a large burial will not save the Amazon. I want to live.” He said this and shortly afterwards, at 6:45 p.m. on December 22, 1988, he was murdered at the age of 44, at the kitchen door of his home in Xapuri: a small town of just a few thousand inhabitants in the Amazonian state of Acre. “He came in with his hands on his head, all red with blood,” said

Ilzamar, who heard a bang and ran to her husband. “When I tried to grab his arm, he fell and was thrashing about. Then I saw that he was dying.” As well as 18 punctures to his arm, he had been hit in the right chest by 42 grains of lead from a hunting rifle. The confessed shooter, Darci, was the son of Darly Alves da Silva, the farmer who ordered the murder. It was only then, in view of the huge international repercussions, that Brazil began to suspect, full of guilt, that it had lost what it had worked so hard to build: a true leader. Like a Gandhi of the tropics, Chico peacefully organized the rubber tappers to fight for the preservation of the forest, which had been cut down in Acre since the 1970s to make way for large cattle pastures. The Resistance Movement used a simple and effective tactic: the standoff, which consisted of preventing deforestation by placing the rubber tappers, their children and unarmed women between the chainsaw-armed laborers and the trees. A skilled politician and man of dialogue, Chico also managed to break down a historic enmity between rubber tappers and indigenous peoples, who under his influence allied themselves in a great front known as the Peoples of the Forest. Decorated by the UN and respected by international environmental protection organizations, Chico demonstrated that it was possible to promote rational development for the Amazon rainforest without turning it into an untouchable sanctuary, but also without devastating it. Chico knew he needed allies, he couldn’t remain isolated in Xapuri fighting against powerful interests of farmers and cattle-ranchers. Some anthropologists and representatives of environmental organizations in the United States and Europe took it upon themselves to project him on the international circuit. In 1987, he was the first Brazilian to receive the United Nations Global 500 award in London. The following year, he was invited to take part in the IDB meeting. With the same ease with which he walked the rough streets of Xapuri or the thick forests of the Amazon, Chico began to move around cities like New York,

where he even stayed in the same hotel as then President Ronald Reagan. Travel invitations poured in and his cause became known around the world. At an IDB meeting, he convinced the bank's advisors to suspend funding for the construction of a major highway in Acre, arguing that without the necessary environmental precautions, the initiative would be an attack on the forest, the rubber tappers and the Indians. If, on the one hand, the external prestige strengthened his internal struggle, on the other, it may have contributed to his downfall. Applauded by the World Bank, the IDB and the US Congress, his ideas were met with violent opposition from landowners, loggers and the large agricultural projects that make a living from the disorganized deforestation of the Amazon. The fame he had achieved with foreign institutions and entities, as well as his charisma – all this, combined with the uncomfortable standoffs he organized in Xapuri – must have made his enemies certain that the only way to stop his catalytic action was death. That's why he knew he was going to be assassinated and tirelessly denounced the threat: "I don't want flowers at my funeral, because I know they'll pluck them from the forest," he wrote on December 5 in a farewell message. "I just want my murder to serve to end the impunity of the enforcers, under the protection of the Acre Federal Police, who have killed many people since 1975." Chico Mendes was right to announce that he was going to be killed, but he was wrong to think that his death could be useless. If he didn't save the Amazon, he did at least serve to intensify the global debate on the fate of the region. And this murder, preceded by dozens of executions of other rural leaders, will have served to expose the fact that in a rich and vast country people still kill over land issues. The outcry that Ilzamar heard reached the whole world. Never has a shot fired in Brazil echoed so far.



"Few times have the Brazilian police had such a complete list of the accused, provided by the victim himself. Not even this, however, was enough to prevent the announced death of Chico Mendes."

OS FARÁ RECORD

CARTA DE XAPURI

Dear Chico: This week, from December 15 to 17, 2018, we, more than 500 people from all over Acre, the Amazon, Brazil and the planet, gathered in your city of Xapuri-Acre to honor your memory and defend your legacy, in the 30 years of your physical absence from the spaces of this world. We experienced moments of great nostalgia and emotion, Chico! Here were your fellow rubber tappers and your companions in the standoff; representatives of extractivist communities from all Brazilian biomes came; your friends from outside the forest, from Brazil and abroad came; people who lived with you came, as well as many new people, moved by the strength of your ideals. Over the course of three days, we reflected a lot on the meaning of that wise speech of yours that immortalized your strategic vision for the future of our planet: "At first, I thought I was fighting to save the rubber trees; then, I thought my fight was to save the Amazon rainforest; now, I realize that I'm fighting to save humanity." Absolutely, Chico! Your fight has gone far, far beyond yourself. Only you, Chico, could make happen, in this Amazonian time of few flights and lots of rain, this profound dialogue of ours that, inspired by you, makes us keep fighting for a sustainable development model that frees us from the evils of environmental depredation and the contamination of the water, soil and air we breathe. Only you could keep us fighting for a fairer, more supportive and more equal society; for that other world that we believe is still possible! Only you, Chico, can keep us dreaming in the face of the setbacks that are already being announced in the first decisions of an elected government that hasn't even taken office yet and is already withdrawing Brazil's right to host the next Climate Conference, declaring war on trade unions, civil society organizations, social movements, the rights won by youth, women, Indigenous Peoples, quilombola communities, riverine communities, extractivists, Peoples of the Forest and all of Brazil's traditional populations. And speaking of youth, Chico, you must be happy with the decision that your fellow CNS members have taken to make this meeting a time for sharing knowledge and generational transfer. Just as you once dreamed, more than half of the people here are young people. They are young people who have come to make a commitment to defend your legacy for the next 30 years! Unfortunately, "the memory of a sad past of pain, suffering and death", which you recorded in your message to the youth of the future, dated September 6, 2120, is still a constant sadness in our day. The figures are alarming, comrade Chico: every five days a comrade of yours or ours is murdered in Brazil. In 2017 alone, more than a thousand conflicts over land, water or work were recorded in the fields and forests of our country. In the last 12 months, there have been at least 70 deaths. The latest was that of comrade Gilson Maria Temponi, in Placas, Pará. Imagine Chico, yet another death when we were already gathered here to honor your memory, on the 30th anniversary of your murder, at the back door of your house, on December 22, 1988, by the treacherous bullets of a shotgun fired at the behest of the latifundia. But it's not all sadness! We celebrate your legacy with great joy. The struggle of your companions has transformed the Extractivist Reserves! That proposal for the common and collective use of forest areas by extractivist populations that you presented at the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, held in 1985 in Brasília, has grown into public policy, not only in the Amazon, but also in other Brazilian biomes. Today there are thousands of families living in millions of hectares of protected areas. And in these areas, although much is lacking, in addition to Extractivist production, there is already a school, a health center, electricity, and in many cases even the internet! But now, comrade Chico, the newly elected governments and parliament are threatening to hand over the lands under our protection, which guarantee the sustainability of our economy and our way of life, to agribusiness, logging companies and mining. They forget that the environmental services we provide benefit not only us, but all the peoples of the world. I hope, comrade Chico, that the achievements of your legacy, the result of our resistance over the last three decades, of the alliances you have so generously built with the most varied partners in the forest and beyond, will sensitize the hearts and minds of those



who are coming to power to continue respecting and working together with our Peoples of the Forest, in defense of our territories, environmental conservation and the social rights of the Brazilian people. I hope, comrade Chico, that right here, on the banks of the River Acre, in your beloved land of Xapuri, in the heart of the Amazon rainforest, the youth of the year 2120 can come together in an auspicious Chico Mendes Week, to celebrate the strength of the struggle that we carry together with our people, from the jungles, the sertão, the sea, the rivers and the forests, to commemorate the union of all peoples around the ideals you bequeathed us and the planetary revolution that time did not allow you to see, but which you had the pleasure of dreaming.

CHICO MENDES 30 YEARS NO ONE ABANDONS THE DEFENSE OF THE PEOPLES
OF THE FOREST! NO ONE GIVES UP ON THE LEGACY OF CHICO MENDES!
NO ONE LET GO OF ANYONE'S HAND!

Xapuri, Acre, December 17, 2018



Revista Xapuri

OS FARÁ RECORD

ERROR IN JUDGEMENT

Chico's death was an error of judgment on the part of the landowners. They thought the same thing would happen in Xapuri as what happened in Brasília when Wilson Pinheiro was killed. But Chico himself had already said several times: "If I die, we have to show that there will be 300 more Chico Mendes." We all made a commitment to continue his work. We decided that there wouldn't be one more strong leader and we divided the work among everyone. That's what the comrades did. Everyone was overloaded, it was difficult at first, but the Movement kept going. As for Chico, the only mistake in his assessment was when, in his last interview, he said that if death could help save the Amazon, he would gladly die, but that a burial wouldn't save the forest. Chico is alive because we keep working with the same ideal as he did: we make mistakes along the way, we stumble many times, but we keep working. We would trade everything we've achieved to have Chico here today, because with him among us our organization would be stronger, more coordinated, and with many more allies. Because none of us, either individually or by bringing everyone together, could do what Chico did. But we became 300 Chico Mendes and managed to keep the Movement from collapsing. Chico Mendes lives!

Gomercindo Rodrigues





CHICO MENDES HERO OF BRAZIL

Francisco Alves Mendes Filho:

**He's our folk hero
The soul of the forest pulses
With our people dreaming
Chico Mendes is the flame
To continue the fight**

**Came into the world
Chico Mendes
Environmental activist
There in Xapuri in Acre
With social verve
On the Porto Rico rubber plantation
Cultural resistance**

**Son of a rubber tapper
Natural ecological
At the age of nine
Worker without equal
A defender of the forest
Social change**

**He was a rubber tapper when he was
young
He had his father's example
With his mother's encouragement
He has always been a fraternal being
An example to all Chico Mendes is
eternal**

**In defense of the Amazon
World leadership
Example of intelligence
A primordial man
For the peoples of the forest Socio-
environmental struggle**

**In the 70s
Military dictatorship
Chainsaws in action
To cut down the forest
Grazing for the cattle
Terror in the making**

**Essential women
In the action of the rubber plantation
With everyone together
In the fight against evil
Confrontation with the laborers
In the environmental battle**

**Peaceful resistance
Against deforestation
Rubber tappers in action
Fighting back
Women in support
Highlighted movement**

**Forty-five standoffs
Forestry defense
15 vital victories
In an unequal struggle
Chico Mendes leadership
Environmental movement**

**Seventy-five, seven seven
The fundamental struggle
Wilson Pinheiro was killed
Trade union president
STR Brasileia
Intense union action**

**Seventy-six ahead
The mammoth struggle
It was a fight for good
Against the current of evil
Mobilizing the people
Against capital oppression**

**The rubber tappers' struggle
Environmental awareness
The ownership of their land
It has always been essential
Brasileia and Xapuri
Trade union movement**

**1980:
Leading the movement
Union in Xapuri
Gave a boost
Struggle and resistance
Moving thought
Early 80s
PT-CUT foundation
In São Bernardo do Campo
Broad participation
Union in Xapuri
The president in action**

**Meeting of rubber tappers
Environmental reserves
Labor rights
And social rights
Chico Mendes is a beacon
National causes**

**In defense of the forest
New trade union style**

Victim of latifundia
With his brutal death
At the behest of a farmer
A sad agent of evil

42 grains of lead
The farmer's son
From Darci Alves da Silva
The gunman's name
At the behest of Darly Alves
It shook the whole world

And in the year 2000
With social pressure
Convicted killers
International outcry
Justice has finally been done
Chico Mendes without equal

Extractivist work
Association bodies
Trade unions, cooperatives
Searching for transformations
For a more equal world
Against vile exploitation

Extractivist peoples
At the National Council
For sustainability
Environmental balance
Spaces of territories
Social transformation

Protection, livelihoods
Traditional peoples

With rights of use
Natural resources
The protected forest
No environmental crimes

In 2015:
Chico, national hero
Brazil recognized
An international name
The defender of the forest
A martyr of the rubber plantation

So many blows against the people
The forest on fire
Our polluted waters
With mining on the way
Harmful deforestation
Fire, machine, soy, road

Time for preservation
Nature to respect
Fighting fires
Caring for the river and sea
Chico Mendes is an example
How to fight.



GUSTAVO DOURADO



Goári



@CRISVECTOR

CHICO MENDES

GLOSSARY

AGRO FORESTRY SYSTEM (AFS) – Consortium planting of perennial, annual and tree species inspired by nature’s own cycle. It avoids massive deforestation and conserves soil and biodiversity. It was greatly influenced by Japanese immigrants and has been adopted in many projects in the Amazon.

ALLIANCE OF THE AMAZONS – A collective of indigenous, quilombola, extractivist, peripheral and other young people from the north of Brazil. The group, which defines itself as “Guardians of the Sacred Land”, aims to raise awareness and awaken a sense of belonging among the youth of the peoples of the Amazon.

ALTO DO JURUÁ EXTRACTIVIST RESERVE – The Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve is a federal conservation unit in Brazil categorized as an Extractivist reserve and created by Presidential Decree on January 23, 1990 in an area of 506,186 hectares in Acre state.

AMAZONAS RIVER – It is the largest and most flowing river in the world. It is 6992 meters long and has an average flow of 210,000 m³/s. It has around 1100 tributaries. Its source is in the Andes mountain range in Peru.

AMANAKA`A AMAZON NETWORK – New York-based organization (1990 to 1997), promoter of Amazon Week, one of the world’s largest conferences for exchanges between indigenous, rubber tapper, political and trade union leaders from the Amazon and the outside world. It served for years as a space representing the Peoples of the Forest in the United States.

APIO – Oiapoque Association of Indigenous Peoples. Created in 1992, it defends the Galibi Kali’na, Karipuna, Galibi-Marworno and Palikur peoples of Amapá state.

APITU – Tumucumaque Association of Indigenous Peoples. Created in 1995, it promotes actions in education, health, economic development and quality of life. It runs schools, cultural centers and activities to support the marketing of handicraft products from the villages.

APIWTXA – Ashaninka Association of the Amônia River. It defends the interests of the inhabitants of the Kampa do Rio Amônia Indigenous Land in Acre, which was demarcated in 1992 and covers 87,205 hectares. It borders Peru, the Alto Juruá Extractivist Reserve and the Arara do Rio Amônia Indigenous Land, all located in the Acre municipality of Marechal Thaumaturgo.

APOINME – Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast, Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo. Created in May 1990, during the 1st Meeting of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of the East and Northeast Region, held on the Indigenous Land of the Pataxó Hãhãhãe People, in Itabuna, Bahia. It operates in indigenous territories and communities in 10 states: Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe.

ARAGUAIA GUERRILA– A movement organized by the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) between 1966 and 1974 in Bico do Papagaio, in the north of Tocantins, especially in the municipality of Xambioá. The military dictatorship treated it like a war and sent the army into the region with orders to kill. Few participants survived.

ARPIN-SUL – Articulation of the Indigenous Peoples of Southern Brazil. Since 2006, Arpin-Sul has been working for the integration and political articulation of the indigenous ethnic groups of Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná and Santa Catarina, mainly representing the Kaingang, Xokleng, Xetá and descendants of the Charrua people.

ASHANINKA – People who inhabit the border region between Brazil, in the state of Acre, and Peru. The Ashaninka, also known as the Kampa, are proud to have resisted attacks and invasions since the time of the Inca Empire. Most of the more than 100,000 Ashaninka live in Peru. In Brazil, around 2,500 Ashaninka live in five demarcated Indigenous Lands.

ASHOKA – Ashoka Social Entrepreneurs. A global non-profit organization founded in India by Bill Drayton in 1980 to strengthen social entrepreneurship worldwide.

ASKARJ – Association of Kaxinawa Rubber Tappers of the Jordão river. Founded in 1988, ASKARJ is legally responsible for three Indigenous Lands in the Acre municipality of Jordão: Huni Kuin of Alto Jordão, Baixo Jordão and Independência rubber plantation.

ASPROC – Carauari Association of Rural Producers. The first association created in the Médio Juruá region, in the state of Amazonas. It works to organize and market the rural production of the region's agro-extractivist communities, as well as fighting for territory and the creation of Conservation Units.

ASSEMBLY OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN – Assembly of representatives of indigenous women's movements, held in Manaus in 2000. It resulted in the creation of the women's department at Coiab and became a political milestone that brought visibility to indigenous women in the Amazon.

AYAHUASCA – Also known as hoasca, iagê and santo-daime, Ayahuasca is an indigenous drink often associated with religious rituals. It is produced with plants from the Amazon which, when combined, cause hallucinogenic effects. Ayahuasca is considered a sacred medicine for the people of the forest.

BABAÇU LIVRE – The name given to the movement for municipal, state and national laws to preserve babassu forests, a palm tree that covers 18.5 million hectares in the states of Maranhão, Tocantins, Pará and Piauí. There are currently 3 state laws (Piauí, Tocantins and Maranhão, the latter of which only applies to public land), and 18 municipal laws, 4 in Tocantins, 2 in Pará and 12 in Maranhão. One of the most recent achievements with the approval of the Piauí Free Babassu Law is the recognition of the right to the territory by the babassu coconut breakers with the duty of collective titling by the state. The first Traditional Territory of Babassu Coconut Breakers in the country is the Vila Esperança territory in Piauí. There is also a law pending in the National Congress.

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation. Better known by its acronym BBC, it is a public radio and television corporation in the United Kingdom, founded in 1922.

BELÉM-BRASÍLIA – The Belém-Brasília highway is one of the country's most important federal highways. It connects the cities of Belém, in Pará, and Anápolis, in Goiás.

BICO DO PAPAGAIO – A region made up of 25 municipalities in the north of Tocantins state, in the transition from the Cerrado plains to the Amazon rainforest. It has a long history of land struggles dating back to the 1950s.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION – Article 21 of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution provided for the first time that regular education would be taught in Portuguese, but guaranteed indigenous communities the use of their mother tongues in indigenous schools.

BNDES – National Bank for Economic and Social Development. Created as a federal autarchy in 1952. It became a public company in 1972, linked to the Ministry of Development and Trade. Its main objective is long-term financing and investment in all segments of the Brazilian economy.

BOLSA FLORESTA – A payment program for environmental services, created by the state of Amazonas in 2007 to promote the containment of deforestation and improve the quality of life of traditional populations living in Amazonas state Conservation Units (UCs).

"BRANCHES" – Overland paths that connect Extractivist populations in the interior of the Amazon rainforest.

BRASILÉIA RURAL WORKERS' UNION – Created on December 21, 1975, the Brasília Workers' Union (STR) was one of the first unions created in the state of Acre. Its creation was driven by the struggle of the extractivists in defense of the land, which at that time established the nucleus of the greatest resistance in the area of land conflicts in the country.

BR-364 – Connects Limeira (SP) to Rodrigues Alves (AC). The stretch beyond Cuiabá (MT) was sanctioned by President Juscelino Kubitschek in 1960. At the time, Rondônia had only one monthly boat trip to Belém. In eight months, a strip 700 km long and 60 meters wide was cleared between Juruena (MT) and Rio Branco (AC).

CACHOEIRA STANDOFF – The last standoff held in Acre, in May 1988, with the presence and participation of Chico Mendes.

CARMEM RUBBER PLANTATION – The rubber tappers of Carmem, in the municipality of Brasiléia, were the first to organize a direct confrontation against ranchers, who were the agents of the destruction of the means of production essential to the sustenance of their families and their culture.

CAEX – Xapuri Agro-extractivist Cooperative. Created in 1988, by the movement led by Chico Mendes, to avoid the middleman figure in the commercialization of rubber and Brazil nuts.

CAPARAÓ GUERRILA – The Guerrilla of Caparaó was the second attempt at armed insurgency against the Brazilian military dictatorship by former soldiers who had been discharged. It took place in the Caparaó mountains, on the border between the states of Espírito Santo and Minas Gerais, in 1966–1967.

CEBS – Grassroots Ecclesial Communities. A layman's movement of the Catholic Church. It emerged at the end of the 1950s from movements such as Catholic Workers' Action, the Grassroots Education Movement and the Pastoral Plans of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB). It multiplied in the countryside and on the outskirts of Brazil, training thousands of community leaders.

CEDI – Ecumenical Documentation and Information Center. An independent, non-profit institution specializing in studies, research, documentation and consultancy in the field of churches and social movements, it was extremely active in the 1980s.

CHICO MENDES COMMITTEE – Created on December 22, 1988, by leaders gathered in Rio Branco on the same night as the murder of Chico Mendes. It brings together people and representatives of movements and non-governmental organizations in a coordination aimed at defending the memory and legacy of Chico Mendes.

CHICO MENDES EXTRACTIVIST RESERVE – The Chico Mendes Extractivist Reserve is a federal conservation unit in Brazil categorized as an Extractivist reserve and created by Presidential Decree on March 12, 1990 in an area of 970,570 hectares in the state of Acre. It is administered by the Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation.

CHINA'S BARE FOOT DOCTORS – In China, the Barefoot Doctors are also known as peasant doctors, instituted by the post-revolutionary Chinese government that organized China from October 1, 1949.

CLIMATE CHANGE CONVENTION – The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a treaty signed in 1992 during the Earth Summit (Eco-92), which establishes the obligations of nations to combat climate change.

CLOSURES – The so-called "closures" were acts of interruption in the construction of the BR-364 highway in the 1980s and 1990s, carried out by indigenous peoples and extractivists to demand safety policies and social and environmental rights in the construction of federal highways.

COAPIMA – Coordination of Organizations and Articulations of the Indigenous Peoples of Maranhão. Founded in 2003, it is a non-profit civil society organization whose statutory objective is to promote the social and political organization of the indigenous peoples of Maranhão state.

COIAB – Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon. Created in April 1989, it is present in nine states of the Brazilian Amazon. With its more than 75 affiliated entities, which include regional federations, women's organizations, indigenous teachers and students, it fights for the basic rights of more than 160 different indigenous peoples.

COICA – Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin. Founded in 1984 in Lima, Peru, COICA works to defend the peoples of the Amazon rainforest, in partnership with nine other organizations in the Amazon region.

COMMUNIST INTENT – Also known as the Communist Uprising or Red Revolt of 1935. Attempted coup in Natal, Recife and Rio de Janeiro in November 1935 against the Getúlio Vargas government by soldiers linked to the National Liberation Alliance (ANL), with the support of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and the Communist International.

CO₂ – Carbon dioxide. A chemical element present in the atmosphere and in plant photosynthesis, which plays a part in balancing the greenhouse effect. It has been increasing dangerously due to industrialized activities since the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century.

CONAMA – National Environmental Council. Created by federal law 6.938, in 1981, it guides the National Environmental Policy (PNMA) and is made up of representatives from the government, the private sector and organized civil society.

CONSTITUTION OF 1988 – Known as the “Citizen Constitution”, it created principles of rights for indigenous peoples and traditional communities. The Magna Carta of Brazil's re-democratization guaranteed indigenous peoples “respect for their social organization, customs, languages, beliefs and traditions” and recognized their original right to the lands they traditionally occupy. These rights have been contested in the courts by the Temporal Framework theses, which only recognize as Indigenous Lands those that were identified or demarcated on October 5, 1988, the date of the promulgation of the new Constitution.

CONTAG – National Confederation of Agricultural Workers. Founded in 1963, it was under military intervention from 1964 to 1968 and became very active in the subsequent period. In 1985, it faced a crisis during the phase of popular democratization, which lasted until the 1990s, when it gained ground among the more progressive federations and unions.

CNBB – National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. A permanent institution that brings together the Catholic bishops of Brazil who, according to the Code of Canon Law, “jointly exercise certain pastoral functions in favor of the faithful of their territory”, to promote the apostolate of the Catholic Church.

CNS – National Council of Rubber Tappers, National Council of Extractivist Populations since 1997. Founded in October 1985, during the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, held in Brasília, to promote the organization of Forest Peoples and the struggle for rights, land and the sustainable use of natural resources.

CUT – Central Única dos Trabalhadores [Unified Workers' Center]. The representative body of the Brazilian trade union movement. Created in 1983, in São Bernardo do Campo (SP), during the First National Congress of the Working Class (Conclat), a national meeting of more than 5,000 rural and urban workers.

DECLARATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – The United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples, approved by 143 countries in 2007, ratifying the principles of Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization, was one of the greatest contributions of Eco-92 to the peoples of the world.

DECREE 1.775 – Sanctioned in January 1996 by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, it amended Decree 022 (1991), which regulated the demarcation of Indigenous Lands, to insert principles that opened up space for challenges to these areas.

DEFENSE INSURANCE – A grant paid by the Brazilian government to artisanal fishermen, who are left without activity during the fish reproduction period.

ECO 92 – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, also known as the Earth Summit or Rio-92. Held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, it was one of the largest meetings of governments and social movements, with a strong presence of Amazonian movements. Among its outcomes are several international conventions and also civil documents such as the Earth Charter and the Environmental Education Charter.

EITO – Task to be carried out in rural activities.

EMILIO GOELDI MUSEUM OF PARÁ – One of the most important research centers in the Amazon. It was founded in 1866 as the Philomathic Association (Friends of Science) in Belém, Pará. The first facilities were completed in 1871. Today it is linked to the Ministry of Science and Technology.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE – Environmental Defense Fund. Non-governmental organization created in 1967 by environmentalists against the use of DDT (agricultural poison) in the United States. It collaborated with Chico Mendes in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1987, it organized Chico Mendes' meeting with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in Washington, D.C., USA, a meeting which led to a review of the IDB's development projects for the Amazon.

EXPEDITO RIBEIRO – Former president of the Rural Workers' Union of Rio Maria, in the state of Pará, also known as the "black poet" of the Amazon. Murdered by the latifundia on February 2, 1990, in Rio Maria (PA).

EXTRACTIVIST RESERVES – The proposal for Extractivist Reserves emerged as a differentiated model of land reform suitable for Extractivist communities in the Amazon and was presented during the First National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, held from October 17 to 21, 1985, at the University of Brasília (UnB). It proposed (and is still the case) that the government should own the land and grant use to the communities.

FAMILY-SCHOOL (ESCOLA-FAMÍLIA) – One of the forms of rural school created along the lines of the pedagogy of alternation, which seeks to balance school and community experience. Its main network in the Amazon is the Amapá Network of Family-School Associations (Raefap), which emerged in the 90s.

FASE – Federation of Organizations for Social and Educational Assistance. Created in 1961, in Rio de Janeiro, with the initial proposal of supporting cooperatives. Given the political reality of the time, it had to change its focus to resistance to the military dictatorship. It has played an important role in the social organization of the Amazon since the country's re-democratization.

FETAGRI – Federation of Workers in Family Farming. It is made up of rural workers' unions and family farmers' organizations by state and, in some cases, by region. The unions, for their part, emerged in the oldest areas of agrarian colonization, such as in the northeast of Pará in the 1960s.

500 YEARS INDIGENOUS MARCH – With the march, which began in the Amazon (where 51% of the country's indigenous people live), the indigenous peoples of Brazil took a stand against the exploitation and oppression of the 500 years since the "discovery".

FIRST RUBBER CYCLE (1890-1912) – It was during the first rubber cycle that waves of northeastern migrants were brought to Acre's rubber plantations to extract latex in an economic cycle of rubber production, from 1890 to 1912, to meet international demand. It was also during the first rubber cycle that Acre faced war with Bolivia in the early 1900s in order to become Brazilian.

FISHING AGREEMENTS – Rules created by communities of fishermen and fisherwomen who use the same lakes and stretches of river, in partnership with inspection bodies. Fishing Agreements regulate fishing in each region of the country, according to the interests of local communities, thus guaranteeing the conservation of fish stocks.

FLORESTANIA / FOREST CITIZENSHIP – In the interpretation of writer Toinho Alves, from Acre, it's more than forest citizenship. It's a feeling expressed by the idea that it's not the forest that belongs to us, but we who belong to it. It's a new social and natural pact. The starting point is reverent respect for ecosystems, the cycles of nature and the balance between beings and the elements.

FOIRN – Federation of Indigenous Organizations of the Rio Negro. It operates in the Upper Rio Negro region, in the state of Amazonas, and is one of the founders of Coiab.

GARIBALDI BRASIL FOUNDATION – Created on April 20, 1990, the FGB is the Municipal Foundation for Culture, Sports and Culture of the municipality of Rio Branco, capital of Acre state.

FUNAI – National Indigenous Foundation. Created under the military government in 1967, it replaced the Indian Protection Service, created in 1910 after international complaints about the extermination of native peoples in the country. It is responsible for Brazil's indigenous policy and its procedures were redefined by the Indian Statute, approved in 1973.

FUNASA – National Health Foundation. It was created by the federal government in 1990 to integrate public health campaigns and services throughout the country, such as vaccination and health surveillance. In 1999, a decree transferred the entire area of indigenous health from FUNAI, with the creation of the Special Indigenous Health Districts – plus, in 2002, a food program.

G7 – Group formed by the annual meeting of the richest countries on the planet, which includes the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy, Japan and Canada. A recent offshoot of this initiative is the G20, which includes emerging countries.

GALIBI-MARWORNO – People of the savannas and wetlands of northern Amapá, with an estimated population of 2,000. Their history includes migrants from former missions and fugitives from imprisonment, such as the Maraon and the Aruã.

GÁLVEZ – Luis Gálvez Rodríguez de Arias. He created the first Republic of Acre, or Independent State of Acre, a short-lived national state in the lands of Acre, on July 14, 1899. Rejected by the Brazilian government, Acre lost its lands to the Bolivian army.

GANDHI – Indian leader born in 1948, better known as Mahatma Gandhi, studied law in England and worked in South Africa before using civil disobedience as a peaceful means for India's independence. One of his principles was called Satyagraha (search for truth) in Sanskrit.

GENOCIDE – Mass killing of a certain population. It is used by some analysts to describe the European conquest of Brazil, where the native population has almost disappeared since contact in 1500. In the case of indigenous peoples, the term ethnocide is also used. It can occur through the violence of land invasion, contamination by common diseases such as flu and measles or even the omission of public policies aimed at indigenous peoples.

GLOBAL 500 AWARD – Created in 1987 by the United Nations Environmental Program to recognize leaderships. It has awarded hundreds of people and organizations from more than 50 countries. One of the winners was Chico Mendes.

GLOBAL AGENDA 21 – Also known as Agenda 21, it is a document approved in 1992 during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, which establishes goals and objectives for sustainable development.

GOVERNMENT OF THE FOREST – A name created by Governor Jorge Viana, of the Workers' Party (PT), as a slogan for the government of Acre, during the period in which he governed the state of Acre (1999–2007).

GRITO DA TERRA BRAZIL – In 1994, under the coordination of Contag, more than 100,000 rural workers from 23 states formed the largest national mobilization of a category about their rights and public policies in the sector in the 1st Grito da Terra, inspired by previous struggles in the Amazon and solidarity with other rural organizations.

GTA – Amazon Working Group. In 1992, the Peoples of the Forest Alliance gave rise to a network organization with more than 600 entities, which would have an intense influence on the public policies of the Brazilian government and multilateral agencies in the forest.

HEVEA BRASILIENSIS – Known by the common names of seringueira and rubber tree. It is a tree from the Euphorbiaceae family that is very common in the Amazon rainforest. It has compound leaves and small flowers, gathered in large panicles.

HAY – Hutukara Yanomami Association (HAY). It is a non-profit organization that defends the rights of the inhabitants of the Yanomami Indigenous Land (TIY).

IBAMA – Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, linked to the Ministry of the Environment. Created in February 1989, it resulted from the merger of the Brazilian Forestry Development Institute (IBDF), the Fisheries Superintendence (Sudepe) and the Rubber Superintendence (Sudhevea).

IBDF – Brazilian Forestry Development Institute. It was the body responsible for forest concessions and also for the national parks sector until IBAMA was created.

ICMBio – Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation. Created in 2007 to manage the country's conservation units, leaving IBAMA with the immense task of inspection and licensing.

IDB – International Development Bank. Created in 1959 by the Organization of American States to finance viable economic, social and institutional development projects and promote regional trade integration in Latin America and the Caribbean.

IEA – Institute of Amazonian Studies.

IMAZON – Institute of Man and the Environment in Amazonia. Founded in 1990, it is a non-profit organization that carries out studies and research. It is one of the founding organizations of the GTA, for the sustainable development of the region.

INDIGENOUS APRIL – A month in which the ethnic plurality and ancestral struggle of indigenous peoples is celebrated. In the month of the National Indigenous Mobilization, delegations of indigenous peoples from all over Brazil, numbering thousands of people, meet in Brasília for the Free Land Camp (ATL), which vocalizes the national struggle of indigenous movements for rights, according to the priorities and emergencies of each year.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES – These are the original peoples who retain cultural or ethnic traits from pre-Columbian societies, prior to the arrival of Europeans in South America.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY – Law 14.402/22, which originated from a legislative project by former federal congresswoman and now president of FUNAI, Joenia Wapichana, changing the name “Day of the Indian”, celebrated on April 19, to “Indigenous Peoples Day”.

INCRA – National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform. It is a federal agency of the Brazilian Public Administration. It was created by Decree No. 1.110, of July 9, 1970, with the priority mission of carrying out agrarian reform, maintaining the national register of rural properties and administering the Union's public lands.

INPA – National Institute for Amazonian Research. Created in 1952 and linked to the Ministry of Science and Technology, it is one of the main research centers in the region and one of its benchmarks.

INSTITUTO MADEIRA VIVO – Born out of the resistance debates to the Jirau and Santo Antonio dams on the Madeira River, it has taken the concerns of riverside dwellers, indigenous peoples, extractivists and scientists about the impact of the works to the public.

ISOLATED INDIVIDUALS – Groups of indigenous people with no recorded contact or who have chosen not to maintain contact with national society. Federal policy has been to seek contact only when the territory where they live is under extreme pressure. This is what is happening on the border between Mato Grosso and Rondônia and in the south of Amazonas. In 2008, the Piripkura group was targeted for extermination in the region of Colider-MT.

IPAM (Amazon Research Institute). It addresses the service provided by the forest by storing carbon and acting in the hydrological cycle of the atmosphere.

JARI PROJECT – A factory set up on the banks of the Jari River, in Amapá, to produce pulp and other products, which began in 1967. The project was conceived by American billionaire Daniel Keith Ludwig and his partner Joaquim Nunes Almeida.

JOSIMO MORAIS TAVARES – Brazilian Catholic priest, coordinator of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) in the Bico do Papagaio region. Murdered in Imperatriz, Maranhão, in 1986 at the behest of landowners in the Bico do Papagaio micro-region for his defense of rural workers.

JURUÁ RIVER – The Juruá River is one of the most important rivers in Amazonas. It rises in the Republic of Peru, in the Mercês Mountains, where it is called Juruá – Mirim. It is considered to be the most winding river in the world. It is navigable for almost its entire course, and its current is vertiginous, moving at an average of three knots per hour.

KAMBÔ – “Toad Vaccine” is the popular name for applying the secretions produced by the Kambô frog to small wounds or burns on a person’s arms or legs, so that the substances present in the animal’s skin penetrate the bloodstream. It is used as sacred medicine by forest dwellers.

KARAJÁ – Indigenous people who have inhabited the banks of the Araguaia River since time immemorial. Excellent potters, the Karajá call themselves “Yni”, which in their own language means “we”.

KARIPUNA – Indigenous people from the state of Amapá. They live in five villages in the Uaçá River Basin. The Karipuna area of Amapá was demarcated in 1979. Karajá, as they are known, comes from Tupi and means “big monkey”.

KARITIANA – Indigenous people who live in a village 100 km from Porto Velho, with an estimated population of 350 people. The first references to the group date back to 1909 and they remained averse to contact until the 1950s, moving around the Candéas river basin. In 1996, together with the Suruí, they denounced the trade of their DNA samples in biotechnology laboratories in the United States.

KAXUYANA – Written documents use the terms Kasuyana or Katsuyana for this indigenous people of a few hundred people who inhabit the borders between Amapá and Pará. Notes found at Funai indicate that they are the result of an ancient mixture of groups coming from the west, from the region of the Trombetas River, and from the east, from the region at the mouth of the Amazon River.

KAYAPÓ – Inhabitants of a large territory in the south of Pará state, the Kayapó live in numerous communities. In the 1980s and 1990s, they became visible in the national and international media due to the mobilization of leaders for indigenous rights.

KRENAK – Indigenous people originally from the state of Minas Gerais. The Krenak or Borun are the last Botocudos of the East, a name given by the Portuguese at the end of the 18th century to groups who wore ear and lip adornments.

LAMPARINA – Rural Workers’ Union known as Lamparina in Santarém, PA. The strength of the alliances with the teachers and the struggle of the communities of the Tapajós Forest against loggers led the organization to a strong exchange with the rubber tappers of Chico Mendes in Acre.

LAND GRABBING – In Brazil, land grabbing is the falsification of documents in order to illegally take possession of vacant land or land belonging to third parties, as well as buildings or undivided buildings.

LAND STATUTE – The main agrarian law in Brazil. It regulates typical agrarian contracts (lease and partnership), establishes principles for their application and provides for other land tenure relationships.

LATIN AMERICAN WATER TRIBUNAL – After the first ethical tribunal in Rotterdam (Holland) on water contamination in 1983, international cases emerged in Holland in 1992 and in Florianópolis (Brazil) in 1993. In 2000, the Latin American Water Tribunal was set up in San José (Costa Rica), with ethical condemnation and a focus on the public interest.

LETTER FROM XAPURI – A manifesto built collectively by the coordination of the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS), in partnership with the Chico Mendes Committee, written by Zezé Weiss and read by Lucélia Santos at the closing of Chico Mendes Week 2018, the 30th anniversary of the murder of Chico Mendes.

LETTER TO CHICO MENDES – Document read during the VI National Congress of Extractivist Populations (CNS), held in Brasília, Federal District, between November 13 and 17, 2023. A collective letter, written by Juliana Silva and Carla Almeida, with contributions from Chiquinho Barbosa, Raimundo Mendes de Barros and other historic CNS leaders.

LEONARDO BOFF – Born in 1938 in the city of Concordia-SC, he is one of the most important Brazilian names in Liberation Theology. He was condemned to silence for a year in 1985 by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, and in 1992 he resigned as a priest and took up a career as a writer and speaker linked to the Earth Charter.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY – A current of social and ecumenical thought in the Catholic Church, created in the 1960s. It influenced the multiplication of Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (CEBs) and led to a rapprochement with left-wing movements.

LUZ PARA TODOS / LIGHT FOR EVERYONE – A federal government program launched in 2004 to universalize access to electricity in the country, especially in rural areas and isolated communities.

MAB – Movement of People Affected by Dams. It was officially created at a meeting in 1991, after more than a million people had been driven off their land by large hydroelectric dams since the 1970s.

MACUXI – An indigenous people of more than 23,000 on the borders with Guyana and Venezuela. They have had contact with Western society since the Portuguese settlements in the 18th century and then with the extraction of caucho and balata in the following centuries. Well organized, they have a culture with three planes of reality that include an underground world, a real world and an aerial world.

MANAGEMENT PLAN – A technical document that, based on the objectives defined in the act creating a Conservation Unit (CU), establishes the zoning and rules that guide its use.

MANGUE – A coastal ecosystem where fresh and salt waters form a special environment for the reproduction of many animal species. The Amazon has one of the largest continuous mangrove swamps in the world.

MASSACO INDIGENOUS LAND – The first area demarcated for the protection of isolated indigenous people is in Rondônia and was created in 1998 after strong pressure from the social movement. Together with the Omerê River area, which has only just been closed off, it covers 473,000 hectares and is under the supervision of FUNAI's Ethno-Environmental Protection Fronts.

MEB – Grassroots Education Movement. An organization linked to the CNBB, created in 1961 to work with popular education and the literacy of young people and adults.

MIQCB – Interstate Movement of Babassu Coconut Breakers. It brings together communities from Maranhão, Tocantins, Pará and Piauí, with more than 400,000 people. The first meeting took place in 1991 and the organization was formalized in 1995.

MOBRAL – Brazilian Literacy Movement, a social campaign launched by the military dictatorship (1964–1985) at the end of the 1960s.

MONAPE – National Fishermen’s Movement. It emerged in the 1980s. At the Olinda conference in 1991, it was already discussing environmental aspects that were little addressed in government policies.

MST – A social movement that first emerged in Rio Grande do Sul, at the end of the 1970s, against the expulsion of peasants from rural areas and for the agrarian reform demanded twenty years earlier by the Peasant Leagues in the Northeast. Its best-known organization is the Landless Rural Workers’ Movement (MST), but there are other variants in the country.

NATIONAL PARKS – The oldest category of conservation units, these are federally owned areas with the aim of preserving ecosystems. They are fully protected areas, meaning they can receive visitors, but cannot house residents. Before the Peoples of the Forest movement, some parks were created where communities had lived for decades or centuries.

NATIONAL SECURITY LAW – Issued in 1967 by the military government, it curtailed freedom of expression and assembly and was further strengthened in 1969, which amounted to a state of siege where arrests could be made arbitrarily. The legislation underwent some changes, but it wasn’t until 1987 that new state defense laws came into force.

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization. A non-profit organization focused on collective interests, usually social and environmental. Although philanthropic entities have existed for centuries, the term is more commonly used for the organized social movement, which emerged from the 1970s in the struggle for re-democratization.

OELA – Luthery Workshop-School of the Amazon, based in Manaus, Amazonas. Founded by Rubens Gomes, it works with children, teenagers and young people in situations of personal vulnerability and social risk.

PAE – Extractivist Settlement Project, a public policy won by the Peoples of the Forest, still under the leadership of Chico Mendes.

PAITER-SURUI – Brazilian indigenous people from the states of Rondônia and Mato Grosso. The Surui call themselves Paiter, which means “real people, ourselves”. They speak the Paiter-Surui language, which belongs to the Mondé linguistic family and the Tupi linguistic group.

AMONG SOCIAL MOVEMENTS – Created in 2002 as a point of dialogue among social movements in the Amazon countries. It has already been held in Belém, Manaus and Guyana. It is part of the World Social Forum.

PDA – Demonstrative Projects Subprogram (Type A). Component of the Pilot Program that has financed hundreds of sustainable projects for communities in the Legal Amazon.

PDPI – Subprogram of Demonstrative Projects for Indigenous Peoples and a component of the Pilot Program’s Subprogram of Demonstrative Projects (PDA), supporting everything from family production to cultural recording in these lands.

PEOPLES OF THE FOREST ALLIANCE – Movement created in the 1980s by indigenous and extractivist leaders, uniting the struggles of the National Council of Rubber Tappers (CNS) and the Union of Indigenous Nations (UNI), under the leadership of Chico Mendes and Ailton Krenak, to overcome the historical differences between indigenous and rubber tappers and form a great alliance to fight in defense of the Amazon Forest and the peoples who live in it.

PLÁCIDO DE CASTRO – A military man from Rio Grande do Sul, he led the “Acre Revolution” and, with the negotiation of the Petrópolis Treaty on November 17, 1903, brought the war against Bolivia to a diplomatic conclusion, legitimizing Brazil’s possession of Acre.

PLANAFORO – Rondônia’s Agricultural and Forestry Plan. Approved by the Senate in 1992, it was launched the following year with the aim of implementing an improved approach to the management and conservation of natural resources in the state, with funds from the Federal Government and the World Bank. It also aimed to correct Polonoroeste’s mistakes. The agreement formally lasted until 2002.

POLONOROESTE – Since its implementation, it has clearly stated as one of its basic objectives “the strengthening of health research capacity”, including research in the areas of malaria and leishmaniasis control/treatment.

PORANTIM – Means oar, weapon, memory. Indigenous resistance newspaper created by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI).

PORONGA – Name of the Seringueiro Project’s educational booklet, written by anthropologist Mary Allegretti based on her master’s thesis at the University of Brasília (UnB), carried out on the Alagoas rubber plantation, in Tarauacá (AC), 1978. The name of a type of lantern, powered by kerosene, which the rubber tappers wore on their heads to work at night.

PPG7 – Program for the Protection of Brazil’s Tropical Forests. Created in 1992 with donations from International Cooperation, in partnership with the Brazilian government. The PPG7, which began to receive donations from developed countries in 2001, has financed hundreds of small sustainable projects to strengthen environmental management and scientific research.

PROTERRA – Program to Redistribute Land and Stimulate Agribusiness in the North and Northeast.

PRC – Communist Revolutionary Party. A clandestine left-wing organization with a Marxist orientation, active in Brazil in the 1980s, of which Chico Mendes was a member until his assassination in 1988.

PT – The Workers’ Party (PT) is a Brazilian center-left political party. Founded in 1980 by national leaders, including Lula and Chico Mendes, it is one of the largest and most important left-wing movements in Latin America.

RAPOSA SERRA DO SOL INDIGENOUS LAND – Located in the north of Roraima, it is home to the Macuxi, Wapichana, Ingarikó, Taurepang and Patamona ethnic groups, with a population of over 19,000 people in around 194 villages. It occupies 1.7 million hectares of plains and mountains. It was ratified by presidential decree on April 15, 2005.

REDD – Reduced and Avoided Deforestation and Degradation. The term was coined, among others, by the Brazilian Social Movement led at meetings of the Climate Change Convention by

RUBBER SOLDIERS – Migrants from the northeast of Brazil who were encouraged to take part in rubber production in the Amazon during the Second World War, when the Malaysian rubber plantations were occupied by Japanese troops and there was a second cycle of production in Brazil.

RURAL TERRITORIES – A program run by the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), which covers regions with more than one municipality (environment, culture, economy or politics) in spaces defined as city and countryside and social groups that have a cultural or territorial identity

SATERÊ-MAWÉ – Indigenous people from the Lower Amazon, the first to domesticate the guaraná plant in Brazil.

SERINGUEIRO PROJECT – The Education, Health and Cooperativism project for rubber tappers in Xapuri (Acre) was the first education initiative devised by Chico Mendes and supported by the Xapuri Rural Workers’ Union. Its participants also created the CTA (Amazon Workers’ Center), one of the first non-governmental organizations in the region.

SECOND RUBBER CYCLE (1941-1945) – During the Second World War. In 1941, the Brazilian government made an agreement with the US government to extract latex in the Amazon. In 1942, the Japanese invaded Malaysia and took control of the rubber plantations. As a way of fighting back, the US transferred more than 100 million dollars to Brazil in exchange for items needed for national defense, including rubber.

STANDOFFS AGAINST DEFORESTATION – Peaceful demonstrations that arose in the middle of the Amazon rainforest in the mid-1970s to defend the forest from the attack of the “Paulistas”, who arrived in Acre to cut down the forests, even “with people inside” and, in their place, to plant large monocultures of pasture for cattle ranching.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – A concept developed from the 1960s onwards, with one of its best-known pioneers being Professor Ignacy Sachs, who was already discussing the ecodevelopment proposal in France in 1968.

SNUC – National System of Conservation Units. It was created by a law passed in 2002 after twelve years of legislative debate due to conflicts between conservationists and socio-environmentalists. It defines the categories of environmental areas in the groups of integral protection and sustainable use (which includes Extractivist Reserves).

SOCIOBIODIVERSITY – An interconnected set of cultures and ecosystems that generates goods and services from local diversity such as traditional knowledge, native seeds and ways of relating to the environment.

SUCAM – Superintendence of Public Health Campaigns. A Brazilian public agency, created in 1970, which worked to combat endemic diseases such as malaria, schistosomiasis, yellow fever and Chagas disease. Sucam was abolished in 1991 and incorporated into the National Health Foundation (Funasa), along with the Public Health Services Foundation (Fsesp) and other entities.

SUDAM – Superintendence for the Development of the Amazon. It was created in 1966 under the military government, generating tax and financial incentives for the occupation of the region. It was abolished in 2002, due to allegations of corruption, and was recreated again in 2007.

SUDHEVEA – Superintendence of Rubber. Federal government department created in 1976 and absorbed by the creation of the AMA in 1989.
with the countryside.

TERÇADO – A kind of machete used by extractivist populations in the Amazon, especially in Acre state.

TIKUNA – With 35,000 people in Brazil, Peru and Colombia, they form the largest indigenous population in the Legal Amazon. Despite the conflicts of the occupation of the Upper Solimões, they are organized and have a rich artistic variety in masks, paintings and weaving.

TRADITIONAL POPULATIONS – Generally speaking, these are communities characterized by the common use of land and forest and water resources, made available in the form of community production and cultural conservation. Variants occur, such as the development of agro-extractivist activities.

TRANSAMAZONICA – This is the name given to the BR-230 highway, designed during the military government to cover more than two thousand kilometers, from Paraíba to Acre. The agro-villages of migrants from the south installed on it were quickly forgotten, creating social movements on the stretches where it came into existence.

TRANSACREANA – The name by which the AC-90 highway in the Acre River Valley is known.

TXAI – An indigenous word used in the Juruá River region, especially among the Kaxinawa, which means “more than a friend, more than a relative, more than a brother: the other half of me”.

TUKANO – One of the indigenous peoples of the so-called “dog’s head” because of the shape of the Upper Rio Negro region on the borders with Venezuela and Colombia. They are known for their rich culture and the excellence of their musical instruments.

UDR – Democratic Rural Union. An organization of farmers, created in 1985 in the city of Presidente Prudente (SP), with the aim of defending private property and responsible for most of the conflicts in the countryside.

UN – United Nations Organization. It was founded in 1945, shortly after the Second World War, to be one of the main multilateral organizations on the planet. It is made up of governments, but has forums with the participation of social organizations.

UNI – Union of Indigenous Nations. A government proposal to emancipate the Indians in 1978 led to the emergence of the Union of Indigenous Nations the following year, which, despite immense structural difficulties, played an intense role in the 1980s, particularly in the debates on the 1988 Constitution and the formation of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance.

UNICAMP – State University of Campinas, one of Brazil’s most important scientific research centers.

UN PARTITION LAW – According to the UN partition plan, at the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Jerusalem was to be divided into two parts, the eastern Palestinian side and the western Israeli side. Sheikh Jarrah is on the Palestinian side.

URU-EU-WAU-WAU INDIGENOUS LAND – Indigenous land declared in 1985, revoked in 1990 and finally ratified in 1991. With 1867,117.80 hectares, it overlaps with the Picaás Novos National Park, created in 1979. The Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau, “those who use jenipapo”, live in sub-groups spread over six villages and in isolated groups.

VARADOURO – An alternative newspaper created in the 1970s in Acre as a means of communication between rubber tappers and the world. It was created by journalist Elson Martins and chronicled the main events of the movement that led to the creation of the Peoples of the Forest Alliance, such as the standoffs and struggles of the unions. The name comes from the paths created within the forest by the people who live there.

VÁRZEA / FLOODPLAINS – Ecosystem formed by areas flooded during parts of the year by muddy waters, such as those of the Solimões River. They are fertile lands and home to a large part of riverside inhabitants. Estimates indicate that floodplains occupy around 6% of the Amazon.

VOICE OF CLIMATE ACTION (VAC) – A program whose strategic objective is to help the various groups and sectors of local civil society take on a central role as innovators, facilitators and advocates of climate solutions.

VOICE OF AMERICA – Voice of America or VOA is the official international broadcasting service funded by the United States government and authorized to operate exclusively outside American territory.

XAPURI RURAL WORKERS’ UNION – Created in 1977, it was presided over by Chico Mendes until his assassination on December 22, 1988.

XAVANTE – They inhabit various lands in the state of Mato Grosso. They call themselves A’wê Uptabi (true people), speak their own Xavante language. According to IBGE there are more than 40,000 people and they have maintained contact with national society since the 1960s.

WAIĀPI – Indigenous people from the region of the Oiapoque, Jari and Araguari rivers in Amapá. With more than 900 people, their population is marked by the ceremonial life of corn and honey festivals and fish dances.

WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organization, based in Geneva. It has a line of work focused on traditional and collective knowledge rights.

WORLD BANK – An agency of the United Nations System, founded on July 1, 1944, with the mission of strengthening the fight against poverty through financing and loans to developing countries.

WWF – WORDWIDE FUND FOR NATURE – NGO created in 1961 and has five million members on five continents. It is the largest independent conservation network and has been active in Brazil since 1971, under the name WWF Brasil, supporting environmental projects.

YANOMAMI – The Yanomami are a group of approximately 35,000 indigenous people who live in between 200 and 250 villages in the Amazon rainforest, on the border between Venezuela and Brazil. They are made up of four subgroups: Yanomae, Yanōmami, Sanima and Ninam.

YKAMIABA – A term attributed to the mythical women of an indigenous nation where only warrior women lived, which, according to legend, existed in the heart of the Amazon.

YOUTH OF THE FUTURE FESTIVAL – An event held every September since 2020 by the Chico Mendes Committee to celebrate the memory and honor the legacy of rubber tapper leader Chico Mendes. It aims to engage young people in the fight for climate justice and the construction of a new society, based on the ideals of Chico Mendes.





REFERENCES

The book “Voices of the Forest”, now in its 3rd edition, is the result of a historic partnership between the Peoples of the Forest and the Bank of Brazil Foundation (Fundação Banco do Brasil – BB Foundation). Editions I (2008) and II (2015), the second of which was printed by the Federal Senate Printing Press. Edition I of “Vozes”, the backbone of this Vozes III, was the result of a joint effort by three partner institutions of the Chico Mendes Committee: the Coordination of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon (COIAB), the National Council of Extractivist Populations (CNS) and the Amazon Working Group (GTA). This 3rd edition, also produced by Xapuri Editora, is the work of the Chico Mendes Committee in partnership with the Bank of Brazil Foundation, through project 21.704 – Memory and Legacy of Chico Mendes, signed between the Chico Mendes Committee and the Bank of Brazil Foundation on December 11, 2023. The original testimonies given by Chico Mendes’ family in 2008, as well as most of the testimonies mentioning the rubber tappers’ resistance movement in Acre, the Peoples of the Forest Alliance and Chico Mendes himself, were kept, with occasional cuts and edits due to space limitations, according to the recordings and texts received by Eduardo Pereira, Elenira Mendes, Joci Aguiar, José Arnaldo de Oliveira, Marcos Jorge Dias and Zezé Weiss between 2008 and 2015. Additional testimonies were recorded by Zezé Weiss and Marcos Jorge Dias, at the suggestion of the CNS, during the course of 2023, especially during the IV National Congress of Extractivist Populations, which took place in Brasília in November 2023. Some acronyms and terms, such as COIAB/Coiab, RESEX/Resex and Agrarian Reform/Agrarian Reform have been kept with two spellings, as per the original versions of the previous editions. This edition III retains the beautiful cover and back cover with paintings by Ailton Krenak, photographed by Gersem Medeiros. In addition to the introductions by President Lula and the great Thiago de Mello, the greatest poet of the Amazon and Brazil, which were present in editions I and II, this edition adds exquisite texts by Ailton Krenak and Elson Martins, kindly provided by their authors. The texts and quotes from Chico Mendes are mostly transcripts of the long interview recorded by Lucélia Santos during her first visit to Acre, in May 1988, transcribed by Agamenon Torres Viana and Zezé Weiss throughout 2022. In addition, all the credits for this edition can be found in the “Voices from the Forest” section or in the corresponding photos and images. With thanks to the Chico Mendes Committee, the Bank of Brazil Foundation and all the people who have contributed to the realization of this “Voices from the Forest”, I wish each and every one of you a good read, with a lot of joy, learning and commitment to the Memory and Legacy of Chico Mendes. Thank you!

Zezé Weiss – Editor



Dione Torquato

JORNAL DO BRASIL

Rio de Janeiro — Sábado, 24 e Domingo, 25 de dezembro de 1988

Ano XXVIII — Nº 260

Preço para o Rio: Cr\$ 250

Ecologista é velado sob tensão

Em clima de tensão e perplexidade diante da morte de seu líder, seringueiros e agricultores começaram a chegar a Xipuri (AC), para velar o corpo de Chico Mendes, líder sindical e presidente do sindicato dos trabalhadores rurais do município.

Chico Mendes morreu em uma reação violenta dos trabalhadores. Por volta das 17h de sexta-feira, Chico havia comentado com a diretoria do hospital da cidade, onde estava sendo tratado, que não queria mais viver.

O Ministério da Justiça enviou o delegado federal Luis Gonzaga Neto para acompanhar as investigações e determinar que a Polícia Federal realize nova apreensão de armas na região. No dia 9 passado, quando esteve no Rio, Chico Mendes disse em entrevista, que o JORNAL DO BRASIL publica hoje, que seu sacrifício seria inútil: "Quero ficar vivo para salvar a Amazônia". (Páginas 7, 8 e 9)

Retrospe

Xe O Brasil não tem tradição de ser um país de revoluções. Mas, nos últimos anos, o país tem vivido momentos de grande tensão política. Um exemplo disso é a revolução de 1964, quando o Brasil foi tomado por um golpe militar. Desde então, o país tem vivido momentos de grande tensão política.

Carro 8

Depois de testar o circuito padrão de 1 de competição com o modelo mais veloz, chegou a estabelecer a motor de primeira categoria eletrônica.

Idé

Em A era dos espies, Eric Hobsbawm conta a história da espionagem durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial. É o último livro de Hobsbawm.

DOMI

THIS
PLANET
CANNOT
SUSTAIN
THIS
SYSTEM

"Quero viver para salvar a Amazônia"

Edilson Martins

A seguir os trechos da entrevista, na qual o sindicalista, seringueiro e ecologista Francisco Mendes fala sobre as ameaças de morte:

Como está sua situação no Acre?

Minha segurança ultimamente foi reforçada, no Acre, por decisão do Governador Flaviano Melo. Ele sabe que meu assassinato vai complicar a situação do Estado. Não que a morte de seringueiro no Acre seja novidade. Mas é que o nosso movimento tornou-

delegado da Polícia Federal, no Acre, Mauro Spósito.

Os irmãos já mandaram assassinar mais de 30 trabalhadores.

Cite algum desses crimes?

Na noite de 27 de maio de 1988, eles mandaram atacar o nosso acampamento de trabalhadores, em Xipuri, onde dois seringueiros foram mortos: Raimundo Pereira e Manuel. Foram brutalmente baleados. Logo em seguida, no dia 18 de junho, Ivair Cinho, foi morto numa emboscada com espingarda calibre 12, dois tiros, e mais oito tiros de revólver. Foi assas-

Espero com consciência de que todas as lideranças populares, nesses últimos dez anos, advogados, padres, pastores, sindicalistas — todos eles foram mortos. Mesmo com garantia de vida pelo governo. Não precisa nem citar exemplos, pois eles estão vivos na memória de todos.

Espero a esperança de continuar vivo. É isso que a gente fortalece essa luta. De parte do governo do Estado não tenho por que temer. Pelo contrário. Agora, por outro lado, eu estou diante de dois inimigos poderosos: a UDR e a Polícia Federal no Acre.



Chico Mendes em Xipuri



Txai

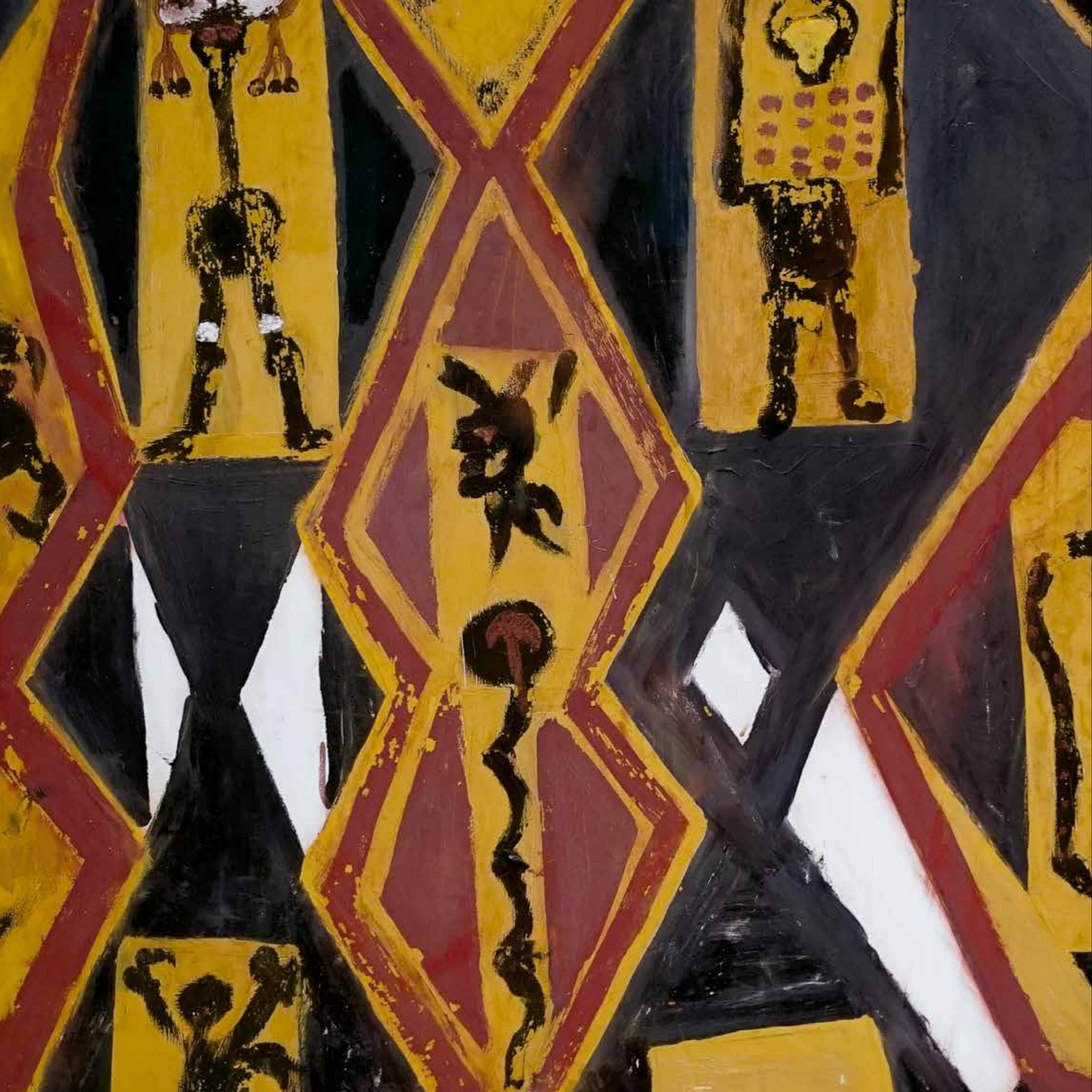
*IS HOW WE EXPRESS IT,
IN OUR CULTURE AND LANGUAGE,
WHEN SOMEONE, FOR US,
IS MORE THAN A FRIEND,
IS MORE THAN A BROTHER, MORE THAN A SISTER,
IS WHEN SOMEONE BECOMES THE OTHER HALF OF YOU.*
SIÃ HUNI KUIN





Arte Huni Kuin









2024

