

Glenn Switkes, 12:11 21/10/96 -0, Xavante Indians: "No to Hidrov

Date: Mon, 21 Oct 1996 12:11:12 -0200
From: Glenn Switkes <irn@ax.apc.org>
To: amb.pantanal@conf.ax.apc.org, riosvivos@chasque.apc.org
Subject: Xavante Indians: "No to Hidrovia"

INSTITUTO SOCIOAMBIENTAL
data 26, 11, 97
cod XVD φφ 159

/* Written 12:08 PM Oct 21, 1996 by irn in ax:ax.ambiente */
/* ----- "Xavante Indians: "No to Hidrovia"" ----- */
XAVANTE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE SOUND ALERT RE NEW
AMAZON INDUSTRIAL WATERWAY SCHEME

On October 15, for the first time in 20 years, representatives of all the Xavante Indian villages of central Brazil came together to express their concern at a new plan by the Brazilian government to convert headwaters of the Amazon into an industrial waterway, called the Tocantins-Araguaia Hidrovia. The waterway will also pass through the territory of the Xavante and other indigenous groups who live along the Rio das Mortes. It is one of a series of plans to convert major Amazon rivers, along with the Paraguay into Hidrovias to export soy and other grains, lumber, and minerals.

On Wednesday, October 23, elders and shamans will travel to Brasilia to present copies of the following letter in Xavante and in Portuguese to the Brazilian president:

=====

CACHOEIRA DECLARATION OF THE XAVANTE RESERVES
OF AREOES AND PIMENTEL BARBOSA

Mr. President:

We are of the Xavante nation of Mato Grosso, from the Areoes and Pimentel reserves, on the banks of the Rio das Mortes. This is where the Xavante nation has its roots, we have lived in this place for a long time. We have taken care of and controlled the Rio das Mortes for a long time and we have defended it against invaders, fishermen, gold miners, and lumber cutters. We have fed ourselves from the River and its lakes for many, many years.

In previous administrations we were invaded by ranchers, but we regained our territory with a promise from then-president Figueiredo. From that moment on, we were respected. Now, the current government no longer respects us.

Mr. President: in the month of August, we became aware of the Rio das Mortes Hidrovia. We have a lot of trouble and are very concerned regarding this huge project. We are sending this letter to stop the Hidrovia with our arguments and our traditional rights to these lands and rivers.

Mr. President: we are surprised that the plans for the Hidrovia have advanced without consulting the Xavante people. We did not know about it until August, 96.

If this Hidrovia is to be constructed, it will be the end of our

Glenn Switkes, 12:11 21/10/96 -0, Xavante Indians: "No to Hidrov

animals, it will cause great damage to the environment, it will ruin an important part of the food of our people, fish and turtles. It will do away with the homes of many animals, dolphins, river otters, cayman, and others.

The company's boats will dig and dynamite large rocks in the River. Boats will always throw garbage and oil and toxics into the River, without controls. The River and also the lakes within our territory will be ruined. Lakes where there are a lot of fish, our food. We know that boats will bring poisons on their return, this threatens our River and threatens our lakes.

We want all work on the Rio das Mortes to be eliminated; we don't want signs, we don't want buoys, we don't want dynamite, we don't want the river to be ruined, the lakes, the fish, the turtles, we don't want toxic substances, we don't want the hidrovia, Mr. President.

We hope that all this will be resolved with great wisdom and honesty.

We are ready to fight united as Xavantes in any way we can. We ask for help from all friends of the Xavante people to stop the Hidrovia.

With all respect, we thank you for your attention.

Cachoeira, October 15, 1996

- (signed)
- Serea A - Cachoeira village (counselor)
- Serebura' - Pimentel village (counselor)
- Luiz - Babacu village (chief)
- Ze' Pedro - Cachoeira village (chief)
- Barbosa - Pimentel Barbosa village (counselor)
- Leontino - Cachoeira village (vice-chief)
- Tiago - Buriti village (chief)
- Supto' - Pimentel Barbosa village (chief)
- Adao - Tapitariquara village (general chief Areoes)

=====

For more information:

Fernando Mesquita, Sociedade Vale do Araguaia - SVA,
Nova Xavantina, Mato Grosso
telefax: +55-65-438-1224

Glenn Switkes, International Rivers Network,
Cuiaba', Mato Grosso
telefax: +55-65-627-1689
email: glen@nutecnet.com.br