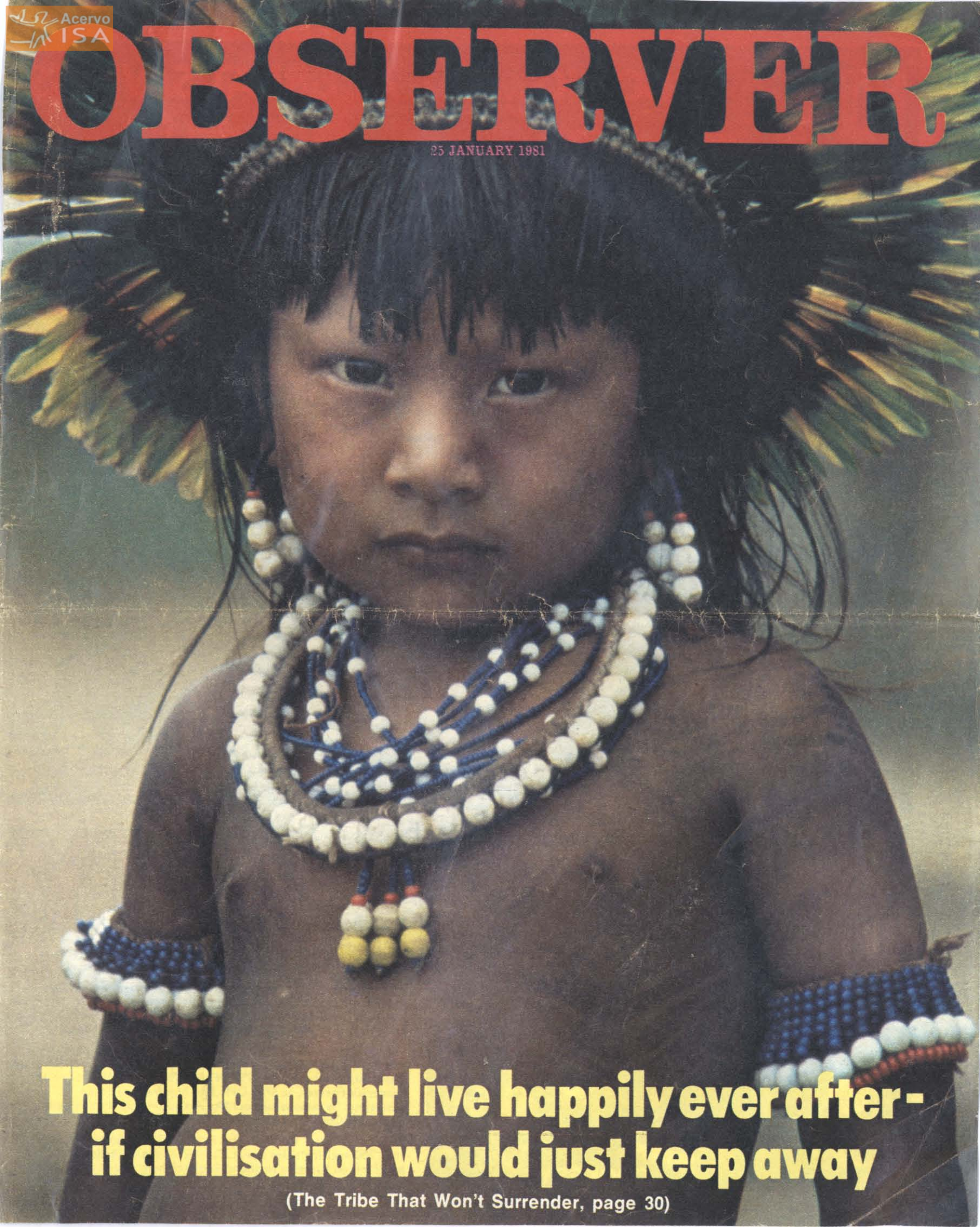


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**This child might live happily ever after -
if civilisation would just keep away**

(The Tribe That Won't Surrender, page 30)

THE TRIBE THAT WON'T SURRENDER

Norman Lewis introduces a remarkable report from the Brazilian jungle.
Photographs by Jean-Pierre Dutilleux



These photographs and the report that accompanies them describe an extraordinary happening: the decision by a handful of stone-age Indians of the Amazon jungle to join forces with neighbouring tribes to resist what had been assumed to be the absolute certainty of their doom.

For tribes such as the Kayapos group this has been the century of genocide. They have been massacred in their thousands by the mercenaries of illegal settlers, by hired gunmen and aerial attack, by such devices as supplying them with food laced with arsenic and clothing infected by the viruses of deadly diseases, and by forcible transfer from their homelands to barren territory incapable of supporting human life. This rancher-settler attack has reduced an original population estimated at 4 millions to 120,000 at most.

Brazilian government organisations created to protect their interests have failed them, the last being FUNAI – the Indian Affairs Foundation – a weak and vacillating body recently charged with corruption, and infiltrated by officials secretly espousing the settlers' cause. The Indians' salvation lies in establishing inviolable reserves, where they can be left to enjoy a civilisation which, however different, should be seen as in no way inferior to our own. Reserves such as the Xingu already provide a refuge from the fatal presence of the whites, but, possibly by design, the Indians' boundaries remain undemarcated, leaving them exposed to invasion.

It is a major ecological tragedy that land thus seized and despoiled by burning down the forest benefits no one, for the Amazonian soil, no more than inches deep, grows only tropical trees, and with their loss its fertility expires. The average ranch is designed for a quick profit. It lasts three or four years and is then abandoned.

It is possible to fly for nearly three hours over what had been virgin forest only four years before and see nothing but a desert of ash. In this charred wilderness lie the bones of millions of animals that once provided the Indians' food. Here the ranchers will raise beef, then go, leaving a desert, and this is what the Kayapos' desperate revolt is about.

The Brazilian rain forest is an international heritage, containing one third of the world's trees and producing a quarter of its oxygen. It is estimated that, at the present rate of its clearance, it will have disappeared entirely by the year 2005. The Kayapos are fighting for us all. Report by Jean-Pierre Dutilleux begins on page 33.

The Megkronotis Indians march through the ashes of their forest – seized and burnt by the white man







Left: war chief Minh. Above: Raoni inspects rifles in Sao Paulo and, right, with Indian expert Claudio Villas-Boas

Report by Jean-Pierre Dutilleux

The man in most of these photographs is called Raoni, and he is chief of the Megkronotis tribe of the Kayapo group. The wooden plate supporting his lower lip is intended to frighten the enemy.

Raoni is visiting Sao Paulo on a shopping expedition - to buy the blue and white pearls, which are the Kayapos' favourite colours for making necklaces, and guns for hunting. The guns are also for self-defence, because Raoni knows only too well that bows and arrows and wooden clubs are no match for the rifles and revolvers used by the *pistoleros* and *fazendeiros* who keep invading his territory.

He already knows about the white man's world. In 1976 he took part in the making (and became co-producer) of a film about his tribe called 'Raoni'. It came out in France in 1978, and in 1979 the English-language version introduced and narrated by Marlon Brando received an Oscar nomination. It received various other prizes, especially in Brazil, where it was allowed to be shown as part of the new 'opening to democracy'.

Raoni's companion in Sao Paulo is N'groire, the jaguar hunter, on his first-ever visit to a town. He doesn't know how to open a door or turn on a tap - back home in the forest there aren't any. You have to hold his hand to go downstairs or cross the street. Yet what amazes him most are the strange animals in the zoo.

Four years ago, anyone who visited Raoni's tribe, the Megkronotis, who live by the Xingu river in the Mato Grosso, would have flown over virgin forest for three hours. Today the same visitor looks down on a desert of ashes and calcined tree trunks for two hours and 40 minutes: nothing moves except an occasional herd of cattle in search of scattered tufts of grass.

Then suddenly the forest appears, a

majestic sight, bathed in the morning sunlight, with sheets of mist still clinging to the tree tops. You have to fly low and follow first one river course and then another.

Raoni is the first to spot his home village. When the plane makes its first low pass the Indians come running out of their huts and fire up at it. The tribe has cleared a very makeshift landing strip near the village in case of any epidemic requiring medical aid.

The plane bumps to a stop, the Indians recognise Raoni, and all of them cry heavy tears to show how much they missed him during his absence. The 'presents' are handed out and soon the village is restored to its usual rhythm.

The men set out to hunt or fish, and the women go to the plantations to gather manioc or sweet potatoes. One group of men stays in the village to replace the roof of a hut which has fallen in. The children practise with their bows and arrows.

In the men's lodge in the centre of the village Raoni is brought up to date on recent events, because these are the last Indians who are still resisting the 'tide of progress'.

Raoni and his people would rather be killed than lose their land. That is the heart of the problem: the survival of the Indians is entirely bound up with the problem of land. 'If we lose our land,' says Raoni, 'then the whites will destroy the whole forest. Where will we go to hunt the tapir, the ant bear, the panther? What will we eat? There will be no game left.'

For years the woodcutters went on clearing the land, using huge chains pulled by bulldozers, which lay waste more than 100 hectares (250 acres) of forest in a day. The sound of the engines throbbed far through the trees, and the stink of diesel fuel drove out the smells of soil and river. The animals had fled before the noise and smell.

In 1976 Raoni gave the workers a warning: 'Don't come any further, or you won't come back. This land has always been ours, and in any case the government has given it to us.'

His people already wanted to fight, but Raoni was wiser, and he preferred negotiation: 'We are too few. By ourselves, we die in any case. Wait, and then I will go and talk to the other tribes first, because we have to unite before we can fight. And I also want to talk to the president of FUNAI (the Indian Affairs Foundation) and get him to clarify the frontiers we were promised years ago.'

The president promised to take the necessary action - he understood that this land was vital to the Indians. Since 1978 the government has earmarked extra funds for the demarcation of Indian lands.

The problem is complex. Most Indian lands had already been sold because of ignorance or plain dishonesty by servants of previous administrations. Other crooked speculators have since sold and resold the same lands. So these legitimate landowners have to be indemnified, proper land surveys made and recorded, and six-yard-wide demarcation lines cut through the forest.

All this takes time, especially as the region is just about impassable during the rainy season (November to March). But if the authorities waited, the farmers and woodcutters did not: they went on clearing and burning the forest. For months on end, the forest along the Xingu was one vast bonfire: game and fish dwindled fast, and even the air tasted of ashes.

Raoni could no longer hold back his men. He made one last visit, unaccompanied, to talk to the woodcutters. 'Leave now,' he told them. 'This is our land. I warn you, if you stay my people will come and kill you.'

He was wasting his time. Three days later the woodcutters started up the bulldozers again. Raoni left for the Diauarum native post to try to make radio contact with FUNAI in Brasilia and warn the foundation that a violent confrontation was on the way.

His appeal was ignored, and he let his men set off. They had been joined by the Suya, Juruna and Kajabi tribes. He told them: 'I am going to try to alert FUNAI one more time. Don't kill the

woodcutters, just hit them hard enough to give them a real fright and put them off returning.'

The warriors put on their black war paint, took their bows, clubs and guns, and picked their way across the ashes to the woodcutters' camp. They attacked with such lightning speed that the woodcutters did not have time to draw their guns in the few seconds before they were disarmed and stripped.

One of the woodcutters told the Indians: 'Why don't you let us get on with our work? You're all a bunch of bums and idlers.' An Indian, recalling a cousin killed by workers on a nearby farm a few months before, hit out with his club, harder and harder, and the rest joined in. With brutal savagery, the Indians took their revenge for all their troubles and all the massacres.

The men they killed were 11 illiterate Indian half-breeds, who were clearing the forest 'because we've got to eat'. Not long after that, the same Indians sank the barge which ferried trucks across the Xingu en route for Manaus.

Two weeks later another Kayapo village called Gorotire launched its own attack: 21 people died. Then the Xavante Indians destroyed a bridge over the Araguaia river to stop the stream of immigrants from the north-east attracted by hopes of a better life in the Amazon basin.

Forty kilometres away from the Xingu river, Bang-Bang is a small town straight out of America's Old West, complete with cowboys and gunmen. A tide of war feeling rose here, and one farmer summed it up: 'Indians and pigs are the same thing. If either one comes on to my land, I don't think twice - I kill them.'

His words reflect the thinking of the other townspeople, who say that it is unjust for the Indians to get away with murder because they are in the state's keeping. 'They've got to be taught a lesson. A lot of Indians are going to get killed around here if FUNAI doesn't make its mind up.'

After making a statement that lands inhabited by the Indians have to



Traditional dance by Megkronotis women

belong to them, the interior minister, Mario Andreazza, insisted that the death of the 11 woodcutters ought not to alter the government's native policy. He revealed that the woodcutters had been warned not to set foot on those lands, and that an agreement had been reached with the Indians in order to prevent further conflict.

The farmers do not agree with the proposal by the president of FUNAI to create a forest zone 15 kilometres wide to separate whites from Indians. They have threatened to set up their own police force.

FUNAI has promised the Indians to evacuate all remaining farms inside their territory and mark out official boundary lines before the end of the year.

But in Brasilia the Brazilian Indian Society (SBI) proclaims that 'human lives have been sacrificed in the Xingu park' and blames the members of FUNAI for not respecting the Indian law guaranteeing their ownership of their lands. The SBI fears the likelihood of other clashes between whites and Indians in the immediate future.

In Sao Paulo, Claudio Villas-Boas,

the South American Indian expert who made the first contact with the Megkronotis tribe in the late 1950s, told me that the Indians had won all along the line, and had received just what they had asked for. 'FUNAI has made and is making a considerable effort on behalf of the Indians. Don't forget that FUNAI is the only official body handling Indian affairs, and scores of its employees have died in its service.'

Claudio Villas-Boas also claims that the new FUNAI president, Colonel Nobre da Veiga, is a forceful man working with a team of officials who genuinely mean well, and that he has got rid of his rotten apples. 'I hope that the Indians will get all the territory they are claiming, because this region is important not only for them but for

everybody who wants to save this forest, which is suffering increasing destruction. As for the farmers, if they're looking for revenge they'll have the army to deal with. On the other hand the Indians ought not to kill any more whites, because FUNAI is there to defend them.'

Raoni points out that he has already given the world warning in the film. He is tired of unkept promises: 'I still want to trust the new president. I will stop my men killing other farmers. I am hoping that it won't be necessary any longer, and that the government will set down our frontiers once and for all. If not, the war will go on and they will have to kill us down to the last Indian. Then there will be no more Indians left, and no more problems.'