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DOUBLE MAP: THE WORLD • ENDANGERED EARTH

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AS WE BEGIN OUR SECOND CENTURY, THE GEOGRAPHIC ASKS:

CAN MAN SAVE THIS FRAGILE EARTH?

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"Their innocence is as great as Adam's," reported Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral of the first Brazilians. Blown too far west on a voyage to India in April 1500, his fleet anchored off an unexpected shore where the people seemed as beautiful as birds. Reports such as his from the New World fostered the idea in Europe of a "noble savage" living in harmony with nature.

In 1986 a hunter named Moãgana (right) guided me to his hamlet in the rain forest of Rondônia. His gentle ways belied his reputation for slaying diamond prospectors. He gave me a wristlet of carved beads to increase my strength. Last December he died in the forest, possibly of snakebite. I still wear the wristlet in remembrance of his smile.

"Last Days of

By LOREN McINTYRE   Photographs by W. JESCO VON PUTTKAMER

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"Eden"

Rondônia's Urueu-Wau-Wau Indians

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To celebrate the killing of a rubber tapper who encroached on their indigenous lands, Urueu-Wau-Wau villagers perform a victory dance. Because their territory is off-limits to outsiders, the warriors face no reprisals from the government. At the point in the dance

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where "hunters return from the kill," women and often children join in. Then all stand and watch the warrior reenact his victory. Letting the bowstring twang, he shouts a war cry and screams as an imaginary arrow penetrates the victim's heart.

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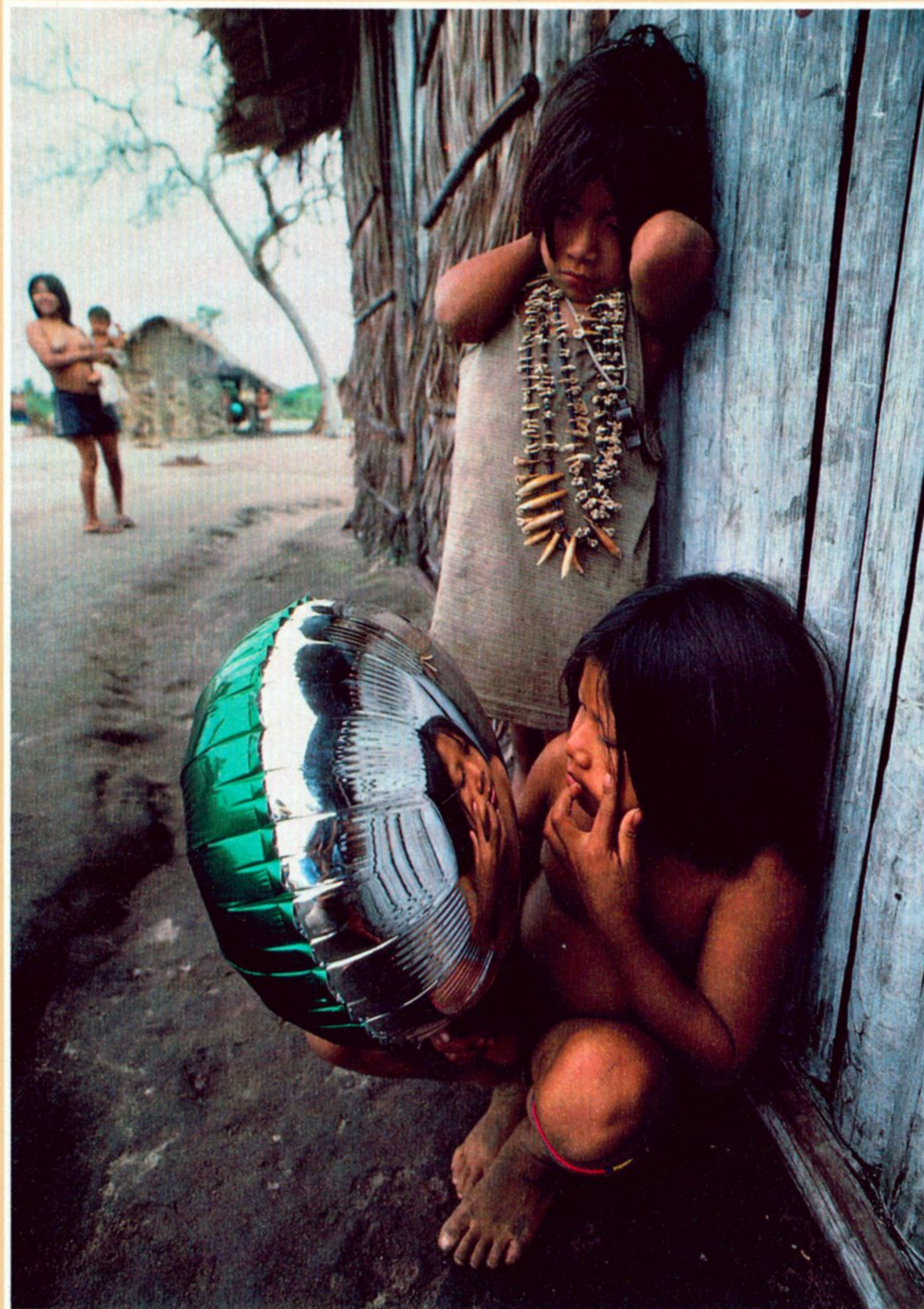

JON SCHNEEBERGER, NGS STAFF

Captivated by her own image, an Urueu-Wau-Wau girl studies a plaything from another world at an outpost of FUNAI, Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian. Offering medical aid, such outposts are the Indians' only official contact with the outside. Her forehead decorated with the juice of the **genipap**, ***a tropical fruit, Adiwu, the wife of headman Djauí, reflects the dignity of her position.***

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Secrets of rain forest chemistry provide a feast for the Urueu-Wau-Wau. Using poison arrows, they down a young tapir that bumbled into their village at night. Wooden arrow points are coated (below) with sap squeezed from the stringy red bark of tiki uba *trees and hardened by fire. An anticoagulant, tiki uba causes victims to bleed to death. In addition to such deadly jungle lore, knowledge of potentially useful foods and drugs, accumulated over thousands of years, may be lost forever if the forest and its inhabitants disappear.*

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A teenage dental surgeon (left) pries a tooth from his little sister's mouth, while their mother restrains the wailing patient. Holding the memento afterward, the girl wears necklaces of many other kinds of teeth, illustrating the Urueu-Wau-Wau propensity for extracting them from capybaras, jaguars, monkeys, wild boars, and settlers' dogs to make jewelry.

A midwife (right) helps Mandé-i anoint her newborn son with urucú, *a red vegetable dye, for good health and appearance. His cradle will be a hammock of* tucum *palm fiber filled with clean white sand laid over wild banana leaves. Native lore and rain forest remedies have failed to safeguard the Urueu-Wau-Wau against the onslaught of Eurasian and African diseases. Even now they die of measles and influenza.*

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Keepers of the headwaters, Urueu-Wau-Wau youngsters bathe in one of the myriad sources of the Amazon, watched over by a concealed warrior and indulgent mothers. The boys and girls swam well, but to my surprise an

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older woman was about to drown until I came to her aid. In the past the fierceness of the natives has protected the heart of Rondônia from deforestation. Now Brazilian law declares inviolate this land once compared to Eden.

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The End of Innocence

THEY AVOID eye contact during serious powwows, a practice I've seen in other Amazon tribes. This time the subject could not have been more serious: to kill or not to kill the strangers in their midst.

The naked warrior with necklaces of boars' tusks, Canindé, and the headman in the red shirt, Djauí, chant in ritual argument. Djauí repeats over and over in the Urueu-Wau-Wau tongue something that sings like this: "They offer knives and axes, and clothes for bitter nights. They chase away the miners. The strangers are *catú*—they are good."

The strangers he approves of are *sertanistas,* or frontiersmen, of FUNAI, Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian, who have come to prepare these natives of Rondônia for the unwanted arrival of civilization. A Parintintin Indian interpreter listens to Canindé's contrapuntal reply, chanted simultaneously. It is a single repeated phrase: "Let me kill. Let me kill."

The sertanistas see Canindé as an archetypal rain forest warrior. He carries a .38-caliber bullet embedded in his left arm and shotgun pellets in his back. He has slain numerous invaders and would send many an arrow winging if he could corner Alfredão, the rubber tapper who kidnapped his mother and little sister a decade ago. Alfredão kept Canindé's sister to serve him; she became his unwed wife and bore his children.

And then there is the backwoodsman Atanásio, the "green man," a jaguar hunter who says he burned Canindé's village and escaped by staining himself green with mashed leaves of a jungle vine, so not even wild beasts could see or smell him. In Indian territory he takes the extra precaution of repeating backwards two prayers, "Saint Cicero" and "Hail Mary."

The powwow is taking place outside the blue plastic visitors tent at Alta Lídia, a Brazilian government outpost in the central highlands of Rondônia. Alta Lídia is an "attraction front" set in the middle of Urueu-Wau-Wau territory as a base for "pacification" of the tribe. Its small staff of ill-paid sertanistas includes Indians of other tribes who hunt food and help make contacts. It took many gifts to coax Djauí out of the rain forest. His "defection" may have been influenced by his mixed Indian-Caucasian ancestry, evinced by his bald head and white whiskers, both uncharacteristic of Indians. Kidnapping is not unknown among the Urueu-Wau-Wau, and Djauí may have been captured as an infant or may be the offspring of a captive.

Well before Canindé's arrival, the FUNAI people had come to regard as friends the warriors who hung around camp. But one morning three bowmen shot at Bahiano Maia, the FUNAI agent in charge. An arrow pierced Bahiano's lung. When nurse Maria Vandy pulled the

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This is the 14th GEOGRAPHIC byline for free-lance writer and photographer LOREN MCINTYRE. His last article, "The High Andes," was published in April 1987.

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arrow out, blood spurted an arm's length. She stanched the wound, and for once the solar-powered radio got through to headquarters at Pôrto Velho.

"We sent a plane and saved Bahiano, though he was later gunned down in town by a drunk," said Apoena Meirelles, then FUNAI director for Rondônia, who quickly took charge at the Alta Lídia shelter. Apoena is a famous sertanista, as was his father, Francisco. FUNAI's bureaucrats in Brasília disparagingly call him Jungle Jim.

Everyone began to wear sidearms after the incident. No one expected to fire at anything but the sky, but neither was anyone eager to exemplify the motto coined early in this century by army officer Cândido Rondon, the great champion of Indian rights for whom Rondônia is named: "*Morrer se fôr preciso, matar nunca!*—Die if necessary, but never kill!" Every sertanista kept a flashlight near his hammock and a tin can as a urinal, because Apoena allowed no one to venture outside after dark. "The Urueu-Wau-Wau love to make necklaces of primate teeth," he cautioned.

APOENA'S FRIEND Jesco von Puttkamer, Brazil's legendary chronicler of Indian contacts, kept a camera hanging on the palm-slat wall. A peephole let him secretly photograph any goings-on outside. Into every other chink and crack in the wall that a swift arrow might enter, Jesco had stuffed pieces of pasteboard.

One day a lookout in a tree called *"Urueu vêm! Urueu vêm!*—They're coming!" It was Canindé and his warriors. Djauí walked out to meet him. Jesco photographed them (preceding pages) through his peephole.

In time the chant ran down, and it was clear that Djauí had prevailed. For five centuries the Europeanization of South America has been abetted by Indians who have sided with better-equipped intruders—conquistadores, priests, slavers, ranchers, and government agents—in the subjugation of other Indians.

FUNAI's Indian employees were soon dancing and exchanging gifts with Canindé's warriors. That night, while Jesco was telling his diary, "How beautiful are the Urueu-Wau-Wau, people from a star," Canindé's young men tried to set fire to the camp, but the thatch was wet. That was the last time the Urueu-Wau-Wau threatened Alta Lídia. Nearly all of them now recognize FUNAI's agents as benefactors, though not very powerful ones.

Indian children at the post who are learning Portuguese report that Canindé changed his name last year to Tarí; next year it could be Apoena. The Urueu-Wau-Wau often name themselves anew after someone they like. Canindé has no identification card to prove he is a Brazilian citizen. Without a legal name, without credentials, he could not vote for a champion of Indian rights even if he knew how. His vote, at any rate, would not carry much weight. Settlers outnumber aborigines 250 to one in Rondônia.

Somewhere in the forest Canindé sharpens hardwood arrow points, while somewhere else a rubber tapper jokes nervously about fastening rearview mirrors to his hat. Canindé slings his hammock in one of several lean-tos strategically hidden within 7,000 square miles of primeval forest reserved for his small and scattered tribe. An official population estimate is 1,200, but so few dwellings have been sighted on overflights that I think fewer than 350 Urueu-Wau-Wau actually survive.

I see Canindé's people as

Flight deck anchored in an emerald sea, the Jamari outpost is one of four "attraction fronts" allowed inside Urueu-Wau-Wau hunting grounds. All were launched by Apoena Meirelles (right, at center without hat), a former president of FUNAI, to "pacify" and protect Indians from civilization. At Apoena's side, in white cap, stands Jesco von Puttkamer, who has chronicled and photographed Indian life for NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC for two decades.

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LOREN MCINTYRE (TOP)

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elusive wraiths in Rondônia's rain forest, an enormous green cage that encloses the tribe. Long isolated in mid-continent, Canindé's ancestors escaped imported diseases and slave raids that wiped out 90 percent of the Indians in Brazil. The tribe's containment began in 1776 with construction of a great Portuguese fortress on the Rio Guaporé to the south (map, pages 778-9). In 1872 railroad tracks began to mark the Urueu-Wau-Wau's northwestern boundary. A road slashing through the heart of Rondônia in 1960 formed a northeastern border. The road became a conduit for contamination of the ecosystem, like a dirty thread left in a wound. It is now a paved highway, BR-364. Side roads complete the encirclement of the tribe, and pioneers are laying charred rectangles of cities-to-be on the natural curves of the Indian land.

A Rondônia map of "killing sites" reveals 45 Indian attacks and eight by gunslingers since BR-364 was begun. Yet the name Urueu-Wau-Wau never made the evening news until 1979, when Indians killed two children of Francisco Prestes and kidnapped his son, Fábio, age seven. Prestes was building a homestead on Indian land mistakenly allotted him by the federal government. The kidnapping generated so many armed search parties that FUNAI was obliged to try to pacify the Urueu-Wau-Wau before vengeful settlers covertly warred on them. The boy was never found.

"Two years after we built Alta Lídia and hung presents in outlying shelters, arrows stopped flying and the first peaceful Indians approached, Djauí among them," Apoena related. "Bahiano Maia, my agent in charge, took off his clothes to prove he was hiding no weapons. The Urueu-Wau-Wau grabbed gift machetes and ran. Bahiano was jubilant, but I felt *saudade,* heartache; each time Indians come for presents or medicines, a little of their freedom slips away."

JESCO VON PUTTKAMER joined Apoena and stayed close to the Urueu-Wau-Wau for six years to collect material on the tribe. He had begun contributing to NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC by illustrating an article on Brazil's Stone Age tribes in September 1968. Working with Apoena—who later became FUNAI's president—and supported by the Catholic University at Goiânia as well as the GEOGRAPHIC, Jesco has sought out hidden tribes one after another before their candor was corrupted by outsiders, "while they still perfect are." He realized that his presence provoked change, yet he hurried to get there with his diary and cameras ahead of missionaries and anthropologists, ahead of the bulldozers that uproot both earth and innocence.

Jesco mourned the passing of the Indians' natural nudity, saying "O Loren, they're not perfect any more." Yet he brought them shirts and shorts. To call on Indians with Jesco meant lugging machetes, fishhooks, aluminum pots, baseball caps, flashlights, and mouth organs. We'd reach a village on foot or by jeep, boat, or plane—but a sleigh drawn by reindeer would have been more appropriate. Indian kids came running and piled onto the knees and into the embrace of this Santa Claus in mufti, "Borbula," their friend with the "great moon face." His bag soon empty, Jesco would give away his personal belongings, one by one, then turn to me in mock despair. "O Loren, you must befriend Parica, this very powerful warrior. He will love to try on your shirt." I wished for elves.

Jesco's wooing of Indians with gifts has impeccable antecedents. Columbus carried ashore in 1492 not only the cross and sword of conquest, but also caps, beads, and hawkbells that delighted nude young men with painted bodies much like the Urueu-Wau-Wau today. And the conquerors quickly learned that once hooked on steel, the Indian cannot do without.

By 1986 Indians had allowed FUNAI nurses to visit two distant villages and treat patients near death from pneumonia, malaria, and snakebite. Diabetes and a bad foot kept Jesco from going along. "I felt sad, but a young prince, Djauí's son, helped me gather the sap of *tiki uba* bark, an anticoagulant used on poison arrows. I think it may be a great pharmaceutical find."

I went instead, unarmed, and followed Urueu-Wau-Wau guides 11 hours along hunting trails as roundabout as any on a treasure map—a suicidal trek in earlier years. In the green labyrinth without horizon I came upon a naked bowman crumpled in the leaves and shuddering with malarial chills. I made him take my chloroquine. When I slipped and grabbed at the barbed aboveground roots of a *paxiuba* tree, thorns gashed my palm long and deep enough to confuse a fortune-teller.

At the hamlet I exchanged gifts with the headman, Moãgana (pages 800-801). Adults danced to celebrate killing a rubber tapper. A child carried a red macaw, emblem of the tribe, on a tall pole. Another tethered a huge morpho butterfly with a thread and flew it like a kite of burnished blue. In the evening girls played at putting fireflies in their hair. The night was so cold that two fires beside my hammock were not enough.

The full moon stood at zenith when I awoke. A warrior was

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pacing back and forth, repeating a four-note chant and brandishing his long bow and a clutch of longer arrows. Heedless of me and my tape recorder, he drew his bow, let the bowstring twang, and shouted a war cry, sending the ghosts that cause nightmares to the moon. Then he went on pacing and chanting.

A jaguar's caterwauling spilled hunters out of their hammocks. Borrowing my flashlight, they ran into the dark woods to shoot it, but the jaguar got away. Next day they hunted toucans and monkeys to roast. I ate none lest they kill more on my account, although the forest seemed full of game. A woman put on a T-shirt silk-screened with dirty words in misspelled English. I learned that Indian boys had brought it from a tin mine where gifts were greater than FUNAI's and where they learned to curse in Portuguese.

To see where Jesco's "young prince" might step through the looking glass into modern-day Brazil, I slogged all day through knee-deep muck to reach a tin strike that was advancing into Indian lands. At Bom Futuro (Fine Future), about 50 miles from BR-364, thousands of placer miners were sluicing the soil of the forest floor under the canopy (pages 788-9). In their frenzy and disregard for law and order they left victims of nocturnal shoot-outs to cook in the sun. State police recently raided Bom Futuro to disarm the miners but failed to find the guns they had hastily buried in plastic bags.

From concealment Uarimã (right), warrior son of bald Djauí and handsome Adiwu, watches with apprehension the miners' inroads. Although he is armed to the teeth, Uarimã's powerful jaguar-tooth amulet sash and bow and arrows are no match for firearms.

LAST MARCH I dined with Orlando Villas Boas, a sertanista often mentioned with his brother, Claudio, for the Nobel Peace Prize. With an almost mystical empathy for natives of the forest, they spent 40 years trying to postpone encroachment upon Brazilian Indian culture. Orlando insists that "an integrated Indian is no longer an Indian but just a lesser citizen of the Brazilian nation."

As Brazil's population has quintupled in his lifetime, Orlando feels that the westward tide of white and black humanity is hopelessly inundating the Indians of the rain forest. "All we can do," he says, "is pick up the hat of a drowning man and marvel that we lived to witness the last days of Eden." □