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Brazil Protects Her Cinta Largas

ARTICLE AND
PHOTOGRAPHS BY

W. JESCO
VON PUTTKAMER

In one of civilization's final encounters with the living Stone Age, a group of brave men reach back into time to touch hands with the shadowy "people of the wide belts." The record of that extraordinary meeting reveals proud and still almost unknown Indians—portrayed exactly as they are.

—THE EDITOR

WARILY, two young men walked toward each other in a clearing in the green heart of Brazil.

One was a friend of mine. The other, in all likelihood, no *civilizado* had ever seen except perhaps as a fleeting shadow in the great tropical forest of Rondônia Territory. He was a Stone Age Indian, a wild warrior whose people for 400 years had escaped the encroachment of civilization.

The two young men came to within arm's reach of each other and stopped. And my friend's heart gave a great bound, for behind the nearly naked Indian, out of the seemingly empty forest, appeared more than fifty warriors, each with a longbow in which a six-foot arrow lay notched.

"Silently the Indians flexed their bows," said my friend. "My hands shook as with the chill of malaria. I shut my eyes.

"Then I heard a new noise, a rustling. I looked in astonishment at the man before me. With hands trembling as much as my own, he was offering me a headdress of palm fronds.

"In that moment I knew him to be a human being as frightened as myself. I felt also he had love in his heart, as I had in mine.

"I took his gift. I gave him my machete. We turned about and walked each to his own side of the clearing.

"Before my own weeping drowned all other sounds, I heard the clicking of the arrows being withdrawn from the bows."

In this manner one of earth's last Stone Age peoples took their first fearful steps into a bewildering new world of men who know how to fly to the moon. One of the longest, hardest, most dangerous jobs ever undertaken by my native Brazil's National Foundation for the Indian seemed headed for success.

Few Mysteries Solved in a Year of Contact

But the task is by no means completed. A year after that first friendly contact, the foundation people working among these tense, wild tribesmen still lived in daily peril of their lives. At any time, a *civilizado* might inadvertently do some small thing that would be misconstrued by the primitive mind and trigger a massacre. It has happened before.

The Indians have not allowed a foundation worker into any of the 22 villages so far spotted from the air. Of an area population we estimate at between 3,000 and 5,000, only a few women have been seen, and no infants—a bad sign, for it means distrust.

When I temporarily left the pacification team last year after many months as semiofficial photographer and diarist, we had not even learned the name of the Indian group we had met, nor their relationships with the Indians of other villages. Did the people of all the 22 communities belong to the same tribe or, as seems more likely, to several tribes? As yet we do not know. For the time being we are calling all these Indians "Cinta Largas," from the Portuguese words for the broad belts often worn by men and boys of the region.

The language of our new friends was not known to us, nor to the pacified Gavião and Arara Indians we had brought along in

the hope they could interpret for us. I recorded considerable conversation on tape; linguists later identified several words as being of Tupian stock—a language group common to many Brazilian aborigines.

In 1914 Theodore Roosevelt and Col. Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, who inspired Brazil to protect her Indians, explored the river now named for the United States President (map, page 426). They saw no Indians. But later, when fortune seekers penetrated Rondônia in quest of wild rubber, jaguar pelts, and diamonds, they were driven back by warriors wearing wide belts.

For years the Cinta Largas were left in peace. Then, in the 1960's, the highway being built from Brasília to Cruzeiro do Sul came close to their hunting grounds. With the road came more fortune seekers, this time in hundreds. The newcomers were of all kinds, from gunslingers a jump ahead of the police to adventurers of substance seeking tin, rubber, or land for speculation.

FUNAI Must Balance the Interests of Many

Hostilities with the Indians resumed at once. There were ugly incidents. And though we Brazilians know of no nation that has ever passed through a similar stage of development without committing such sins, my country is ashamed of some of the things then done by its nominally civilized citizens.

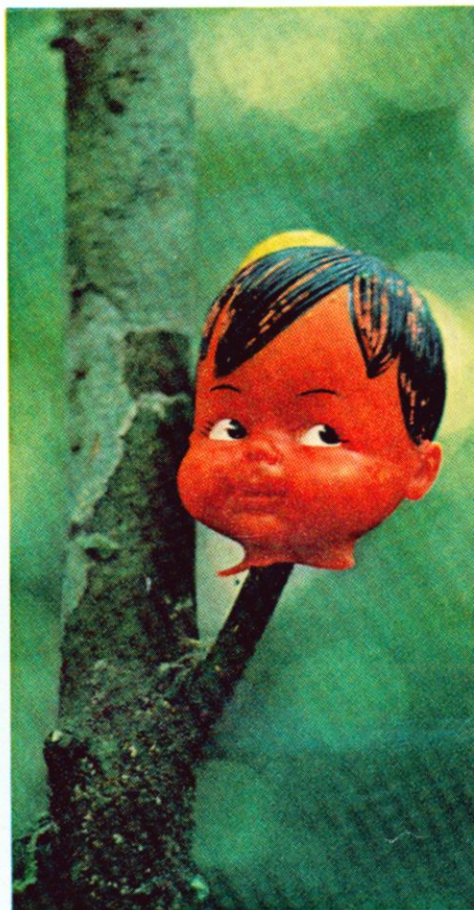
Indians were shot on sight. I know several Cinta Largas with bullet scars, and one who survived a machete slash that almost split his face. A Cinta Larga village was dynamited from the air. Poisoned foods were left temptingly on trails.

The Indians also did cruel things. They killed the young wife of a settler on the Riozinho River. They murdered a rubber tapper with 13 arrows and gruesomely mutilated the corpse. And once a Cinta Larga proudly showed me his prize trophy, a set of false teeth.

Eventually the government acted. It ordered the National Foundation for the Indian—FUNAI, we call it, from its Portuguese name—into action. FUNAI is the agency with which the government replaced its original Indian Protection Service in 1967; over the years the old service had grown cumbersome and tangled in red tape.

FUNAI's mission is a dual one. First, it pacifies hostile Indians so that Brazil, an underdeveloped nation, may extract the riches of its vast wilderness area as efficiently and painlessly as possible. Second, it protects the Indians it pacifies against the harmful aspects of our civilization with which they cannot cope.

As an example, it prosecutes trespassers on lands set aside for Indian use. It guards its charges against exploitation. It seeks to keep the diseases of civilization



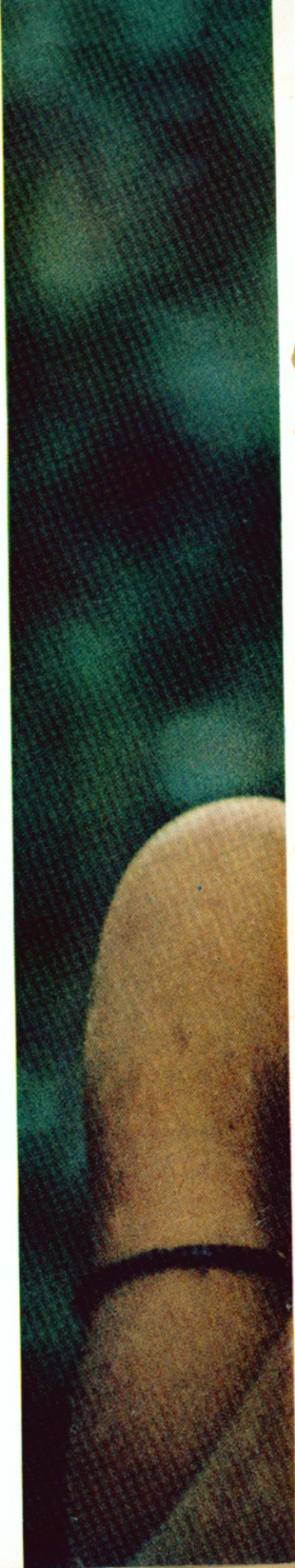
EKTACHROME © N.G.S.

Friendship rebuffed: Stone Age Indians of western Brazil mutilated a plastic doll left for them as a gift, and then impaled the head on a tree. This angry rejection marked an early attempt to contact the Cinta Largas, after nine months of fruitless effort.

During their months-long “flirtation,” members of a Brazilian Government expedition sought to gain the confidence of the Cinta Largas by leaving gifts of tools and trinkets in the forest. Playing a wordless game of trust, José Moreno (**below**) ties peace offerings to a hunting shelter frequented by the Indians. Cinta Largas retrieved them unobserved, leaving in exchange their own plumed headdresses, seeds, even arrows. Hinting at preferred presents (**bottom**), they left a stone ax and clever imitations of scissors, needle, and knife. After almost a year of such exchanges, an Indian steps cautiously into view (**right**). He carries a six-foot bow and bamboo-tipped arrows. Armlets and a necklace of wild nuts adorn his nearly nude body. The facial tattoo may signify rank.



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away until the Indians can be immunized; otherwise, measles or smallpox might sweep the region, taking a fearsome toll.

But there is one thing that not even the selfless, dedicated people of FUNAI can prevent. That is the erosion of a simple culture by a strong, complex one.

The process begins the moment a wild man exchanges his stone knife for a steel one, or wears a *civilizado's* discarded shirt. It ends, at best, in assimilation by civilization, or survival on a reservation that is an island in an alien cultural sea. At worst, it terminates in despair and ultimate extinction.

But in no event can the Stone Age Indian ever be the same again, and that is why each FUNAI *sertanista*, or Indian expert, carries in his heart *saudade*, a nostalgic sadness. For he must live with the knowledge that whether

he brings stark tragedy or better lives to the people of the forest, he will unavoidably diminish a simple, fragile beauty the world can never see again.

Still, FUNAI has a job to do. Francisco Meireles, leader of the Cinta Largas expedition, was earnestly trying to do his when I first met him at the Seventh of September advance pacification camp.

"Chico" Meireles is one of the most famous and experienced *sertanistas* on the FUNAI roster. Others are the brothers Villas Boas, Orlando and Claudio, with whom I served on the Xingu River during the pacification of the Tchikao tribe a few years ago.*

*See the Villas Boas' "Saving Brazil's Stone Age Tribes From Extinction" in the September 1968 GEOGRAPHIC. The late Harald Schultz also wrote movingly of Brazil's Indians in the January 1966, May 1964, and January 1962 GEOGRAPHICS.



"I have had about thirty people camped here for six months," Chico complained as I slid off the mule that had carried me in from the highway. "Has any one of us seen a single Cinta Larga? No, they are ghosts. They take the machetes, scissors, pots, pans, and such things as we set out for them, but they permit us not even a glimpse of themselves.

"It is most frustrating, for we are using all the techniques we have found successful in the past. We do not push; we leave all initiative to them. We come to them with love."

Eventually the Cinta Largas gave us reasons to hope. They left headdresses for us, made with the brilliant plumage of forest birds—objects so elaborate and so beautiful that they must have been of great value to their makers.

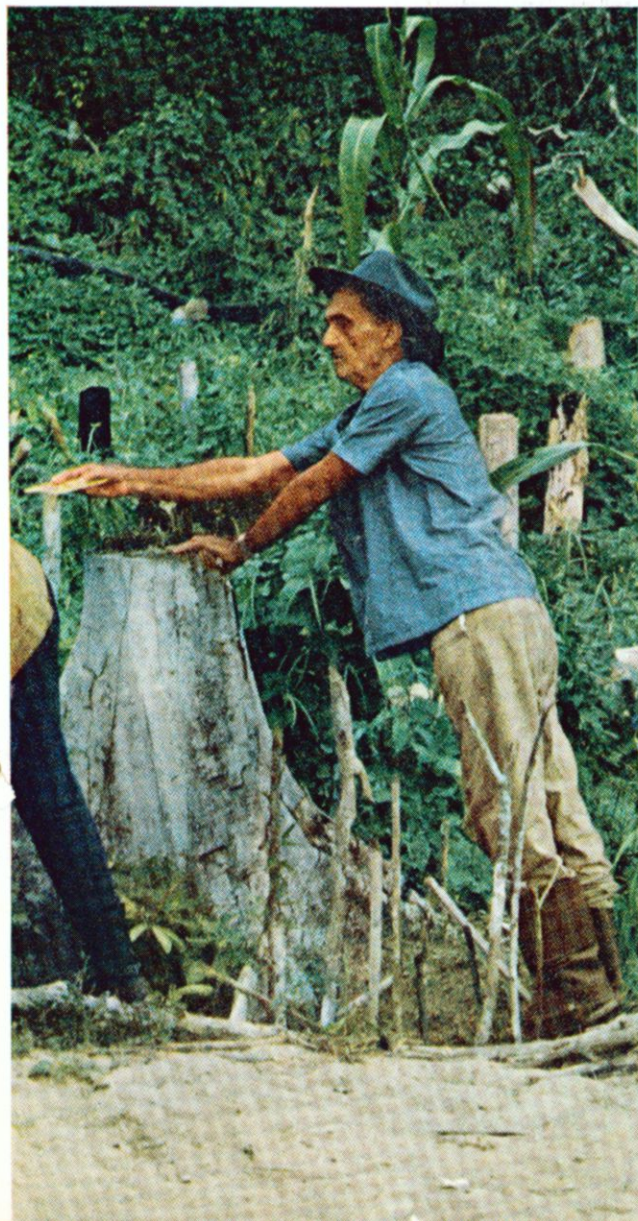
We received manioc, peanuts, and corn,

staple items of Indian diet. We were elated, for such gifts seemed to imply that we were expected to remain and plant crops. One day there appeared a bow, taller than a man, and a good supply of arrows with razor-sharp, fire-hardened bamboo tips. Surely these were tokens of trust.

We still saw no one, though the Indians became increasingly careless about making noise. Once, while I helped lay out presents at the exchange place, I heard someone cough.

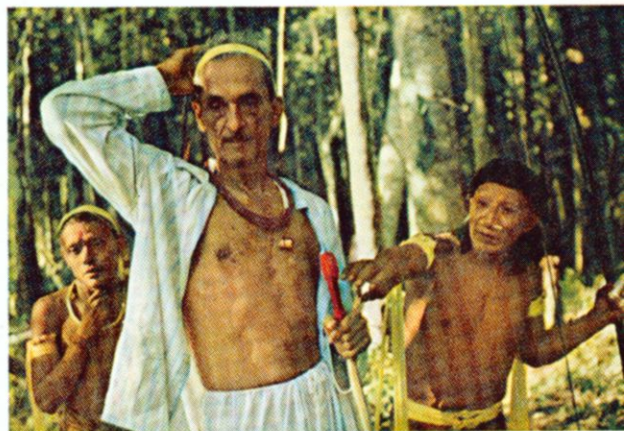
"You smoke too much," I said jokingly to a man behind me. Then I saw that he was staring in fear at a bush fifty feet from us.

For the next ten minutes, while we finished our work, I watched that bush. But I saw nothing, not even the movement of a leaf. We laid the last gift down and started back to camp. Suddenly a series of sounds came from

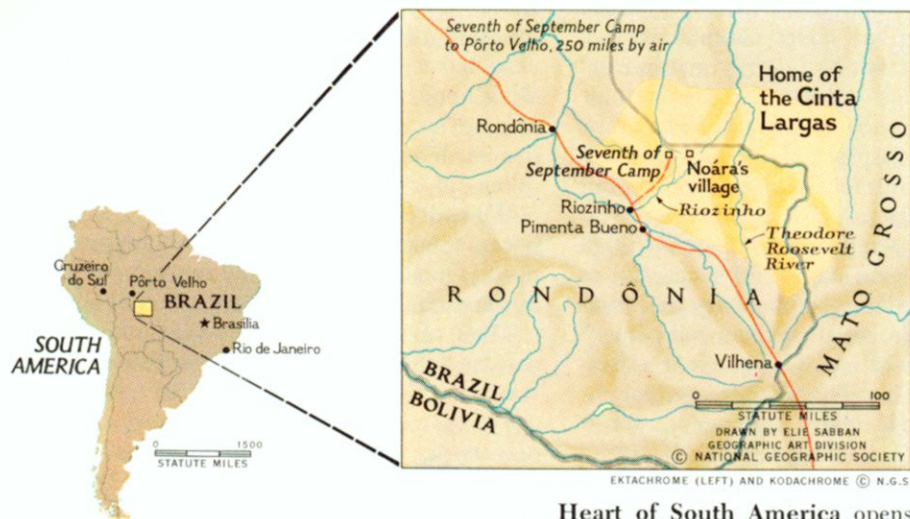


Bridging the ages, an Indian warily accepts sewing needles from Apoena Meireles' outstretched hand. Apoena's father, veteran Indian expert and expedition leader Francisco Meireles, offers more gifts. Three youths watch as their companion takes a hesitant step toward civilization. For modesty, the Indians keep their scrotums pulled up and secured with palm-leaf ribbons. On their backs they carry sticks which they rub together to make fire.

Delicate balance of friendship: A Cinta Larga reaches for the machete of Francisco Meireles, who will not resist for fear of destroying the fragile relationship.



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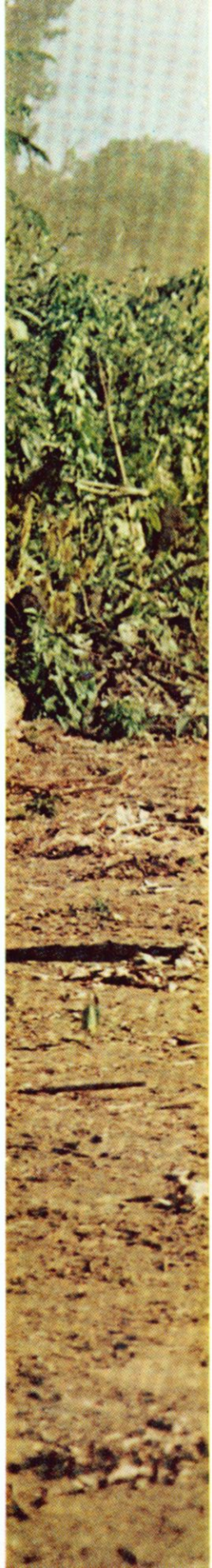
EKTACHROME (LEFT) AND KODACHROME © N.G.S.



Heart of South America opens to civilization as Brazil moves to develop its natural resources. In Rondônia and Mato Grosso, 3,000 to 5,000 Cinta Larga Indians, of whom little is known beyond the fact of their existence, live in scattered villages. As prospectors and developers enter the area, Brazilian Indian experts attempt to contact the Cinta Largas, hoping to protect them from armed clashes, from diseases to which they have no natural immunity, and from the sudden shock of a bewildering technology.

In a rare moment of cooperation, an Indian and an expedition member work side by side. As the camp's tense visitors relaxed, they began imitating their new friends. Before trying his hand at tamping the airstrip, this warrior handed bow and arrows to a *civilizado*—the ultimate sign of trust.

Fleeing a metal monster, a Cinta Larga runs from a supply plane at the camp airstrip. The engine's sputtering warm-up aroused his curiosity, but the roaring takeoff sent him fleeing in terror. Since then, three Indian boys have made the 250-mile flight to Porto Velho, capital of Rondônia Territory.





the bush: the cry of a monkey, bird trills—and a very human giggle.

Encouraged, we tried noises of our own. Nearing the place of exchange each morning, we sang, we shouted, we banged the boles of the trees with machetes. The best sort of primitive philosophy, this: The man who comes noisily comes in peace.

We turned my tape recorder to full volume, and the forest rang with the singing and flute music of the Indian tribes I had known along the Xingu River. Our interpreters shouted into the forest in several aboriginal languages.

“Do not fear us.” “We will not harm you.” “Come to us.”

No response. But the exchange of gifts continued, and from it we learned something about the Cinta Largas’ tastes. For example, they appeared to have a genuine antipathy toward the lids of aluminum pots: They bent them into uselessness and threw them away.

In the beginning they shattered the mirrors we had left, though eventually they would learn to value them (page 433).

In one of the mule convoys that supplied the camp from the roadside settlement of Riozinho, we found a carton of little plastic dolls. We left them for our friends. Next day we found them ripped apart, the heads stuck on tree limbs (page 421), the bodies, skewered by arrows, lying beside the trail.

Would-be Bathers Must First Oust Fish

As time passed, the lack of amenities in our daily lives began to get on our nerves. Most sertanistas love the life of the wilderness, but they cannot forget the attractions of a cold beer and a hot bath.

The tub at our camp is a pool in a forest stream. Trusting the water will not be too muddy to wash with, one sets forth for the pool in heavy boots, for many poisonous snakes, including rattlers of respectable size, live near the stream. At poolside one first skims off dead fish, victims of Cinta Larga fish poisoning upstream. Next one throws in a few stones and stirs the bottom with a stick.

This last maneuver is designed to frighten away stingrays and electric eels. The former can inflict severe, even crippling, wounds if stepped or sat upon. The eels, running to six

feet in length, can deliver a shock sufficient to knock a man unconscious. The ray usually flees downstream, but the eel, a curious fellow, comes back to see what is going on. When his snakelike head pokes out of the water, it is best to frighten him off with another stone.

There are other forest animals that are not the most congenial of neighbors. Like the Amazon Indians, I consider the big spotted jaguars we frequently hear (but rarely see) a menace, at least to women and children. And there are women and children in our camp. Chico feels that their presence assures the Cinta Largas of our peaceful intentions.

Even Jaguars Yield to Foraging Pigs

Everyone fears the peccaries, the wild pigs that abound in the forest. The pigs come in two sizes, large and small, and they go about in sizable bands, gnashing their teeth and smelling to high heaven. When we see the larger species—the white-lipped peccary—headed our way, we look to our guns and our line of retreat; even the jaguars give them the right-of-way.

But most forest creatures are inoffensive: The shy tapir; the capybara, largest of rodents; monkeys of many kinds; deer in assorted sizes; turtles; gaudy birds, such as the brilliant red macaws and the turkey-size *mutums*, or curassows. Of necessity we hunt and eat them. Otherwise we could not survive here, for our lines of supply from civilization are often disrupted.

In the rainy season, mud, fallen trees, and swollen rivers prevent mule caravans carrying our supplies from making the 56-mile trip from Riozinho to our camp. The trail to camp is an old one cut years ago by rubber tappers, before they were driven out by the Indians.

The mule caravans run another risk: Occasionally the Cinta Largas stampede a pack-train. The mules find their way home, but often without their cargoes.

To keep our minds occupied, we work very hard. We begin to cut an airstrip and a plantation out of the virgin forest, Indian fashion, with machete and fire. We dig a well.

We must frequently take apart and clean our mechanical devices—the little gasoline-powered generator, the radio transmitter, my

Prelude to abduction? After a playful scuffle, an Indian clutching camp booty suddenly yanks an expedition youngster toward the forest. Fear mounts in the boy’s face. “When camp members put a stop to the maneuver, the warrior laughed as if it was all a joke—but we weren’t sure,” says the author.





EKTACHROME © N.G.S.

cameras. In this humidity everything quickly turns rusty and moldy.

We shoot at targets. We swat the *borrachudos*, the biting flies. In the evenings we have tape-recorder concerts, and sometimes I play my accordion.

We have our share of silly quarrels. But also we nurse each other through our attacks of malaria. This illness is a serious thing here, and one of our men has died of it.

Stirring Moment Caps Long Campaign

One day Chico Meireles was away from camp. His son Apoena—named for a chief of the Chavante tribe, which Chico pacified—was in command. Just 20 years old, Apoena was already a fine sertanista, lacking only the experience of his father to make him his equal in the forest.

Big stars mark the day in my diary:

“At last the Cinta Largas have made overtures! Returning to camp from the place of exchange, our people heard shouting behind them. They looked back.

“There in the clearing four warriors stood in plain view, waving and calling in a language no one understood.

“Apoena was summoned. By the time he arrived, only one Indian remained in sight. When Apoena tried to approach, he too ran into the forest. The jungle fell silent.”

Five days later the Cinta Largas called again from the forest. It was then that Apoena and the magnificent young warrior leader we now know as Noára (opposite) reached trembling hands to each other across the millenniums of history.

Faithful to the policy of leaving the initiative to the Indians, Apoena returned to camp to await the Cinta Largas’ next move. It came the following morning. While two score armed warriors watched from the far side of the stream, four boys about 15 years old crossed our log bridge and trotted into camp.

Wondering why the Indians sent boys instead of adults, we nevertheless met them with smiles, holding out new axes and machetes.

These the youngsters snatched avidly and took across the stream, after which they returned and held their hands out for more.

For an hour we gave out presents and were given things in return—ornaments and arrows. As our supplies dwindled, we tried to break off the trading by ignoring the outstretched hands. At this the four boys simply ran through camp and picked up whatever took their fancy.

One entered the cookshack, took every pot and skillet he could carry, and set off for the forest at a run, pursued by the enraged cook.

“Let him have them!” shouted Apoena. “Do you want us all massacred?”

Indeed, on the other side of the stream, the watching warriors were fitting arrows to their bows. Had our cook laid a hand on that boy, I am sure we would have paid for it with our lives. For though we carry arms, we will never violate the commandment handed down by FUNAI’s spiritual founder, Colonel Rondon: “Die if necessary, but never kill.”

Machete Opens a Puzzling Container

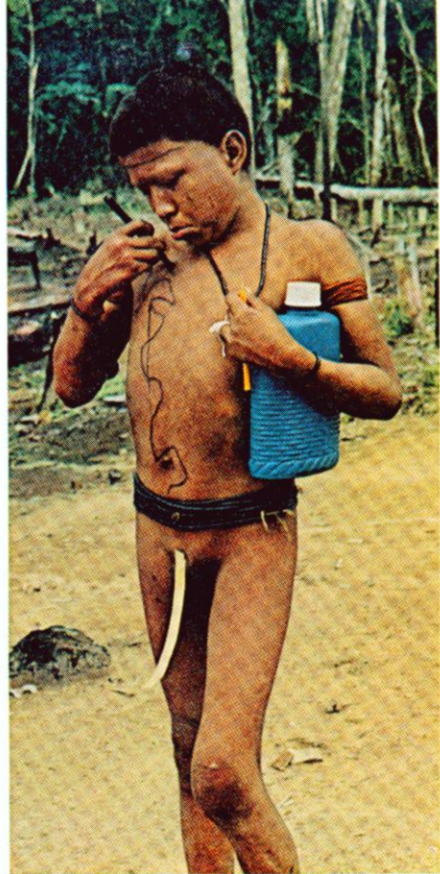
Encouraged by the success of the kitchen raid, the four boys now all but took the camp to pieces in their search for treasure. They dug in what they thought likely hiding places, they searched the sleeping huts, poked into every drawer and cupboard.

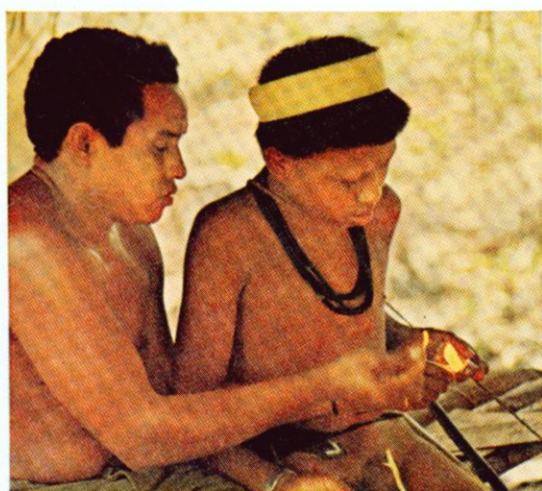
One lad was puzzled about how to open a suitcase, but not for long: He slashed into it with a machete. He fingered the clothes, money, and papers within in wonder, but took only a knife, after first discarding its sheath.

Among the camp dogs was a silly, friendly one. The boys carried it away. It escaped and came home that night, but was taken again next day. This went on for two weeks, until the dog tired of the game and stayed with the Indians of its own accord. Another, an old mongrel, bit the lads, and they left it alone.

At first our visitors were extremely tense and nervous. Any sudden moves on our part, any attempts to get close to them, put them to flight. But as the days passed and we let

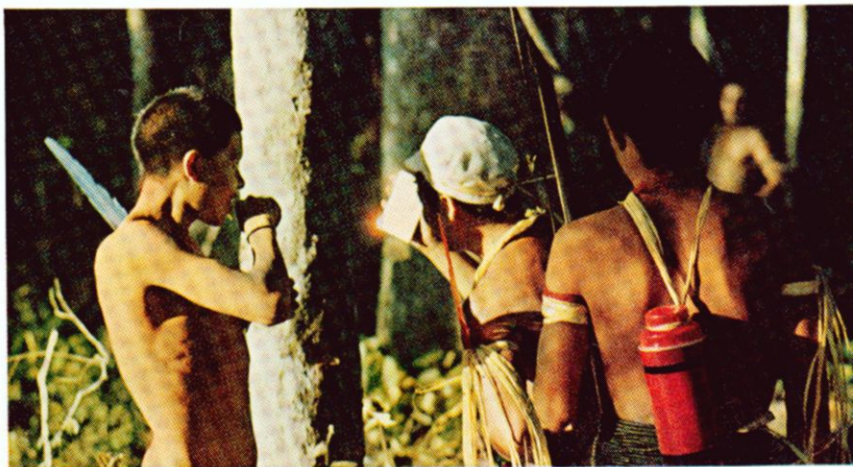
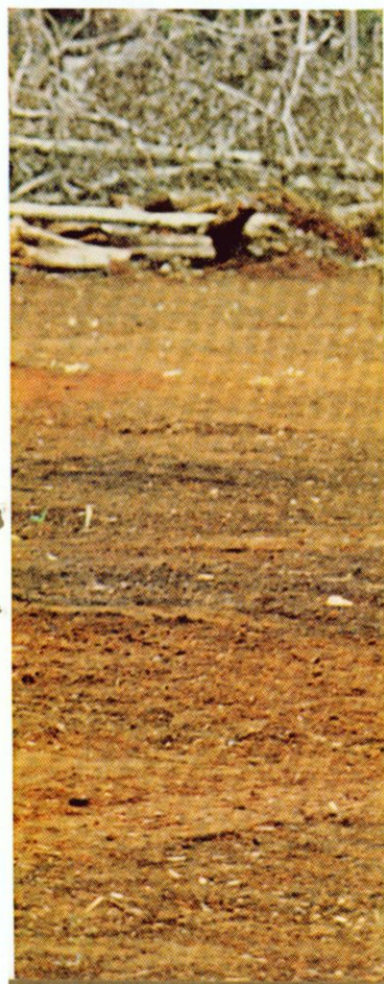
With a king’s composure, proud Chief Noára pays a call at the expedition’s camp. Bark belts, one slung over his shoulder, may serve as armor; warring Cinta Largas use arrows tipped with fire-hardened bamboo. But disease, not war, could spell the Indians’ doom. The expedition hopes to immunize them soon against such illnesses as measles and smallpox, to which these forest dwellers have no resistance.





“Magic” from another world draws Indians to the camp. The author’s writing worried them: When he jotted down their words and repeated them, the Indians ripped his notes in alarm. Lured to a ball-point pen, one drew lines, a circle, and a squiggly pattern (far left). An ink marker makes an instant success with a youngster, who decorates his body while clutching a plastic bottle (middle, left).

Matches, first regarded as sorcery, intrigue Takanine, here lighting dozens at a time (left).



EKTACHROMES © N.G.S.

A mirror frightens, then fascinates Cinta Largas (above), who have also appropriated a cap and a vacuum bottle.

Struggling with a wheelbarrow (left), an Indian fails to realize the purpose of the wheel as he pushes the legs into the ground. The Indians often took things whose use they did not understand, but they usually discarded them later in the vicinity of the camp.





them do as they pleased, they grew bolder. I held the tape-recorder microphone toward one. His face contorted. Then he shouted angrily at me and swung his machete at the machine.

All the boys made what I took to be threatening gestures when I aimed my whirring movie camera at them, although they exhibited only minor annoyance at my still photography, and did not even flinch at my flashbulbs.

"What juvenile delinquents!" I said to Apoena after one boy had snatched the sunshade from my camera and made off with it. "I am beginning to believe these Cinta Largas must be the most arrogant of all the Indians in Brazil."

"Ah, no, Jesco," said the young sertanista. "We are seeing a rare and wonderful thing. We are not dealing here with the pitiful remnants of a beaten tribe, but with vigorous youngsters from a healthy, proud people who have always been masters of their own destiny.

"We are in a delicate position. We must move carefully, lest we frighten these people into killing us, or, just as bad, humiliate them and crush their spirits. You see," he added, "these Cinta Largas think *they* have pacified *us*!"

Civilizados Willingly Accept Menial Tasks

As time went on, it began to appear as though their purpose in "taming" us had been to make servants of us. The boys allowed us to accompany them on hunting trips, but expected us to carry the game they killed. Of course we did so. When we came to streams deep enough to harbor stingrays and electric eels, the Indians silently climbed upon our backs, and we carried them across the water.

We were also asked—commanded might be a better word—to join Cinta Larga fishing parties. Like most Brazilian Indians, they usually fished with the sap of a vine called timbo. This vine, pounded on a streamside rock, produces a milky juice which runs into the water and stupefies the fish.

Beating timbo is hard work, so this job was given to us. In addition, I was always chosen to gather the vines. This made good sense. Timbo climbs into trees and must be pulled down—an easier task for my heavy self than for the smaller Cinta Largas.

Once I collected and beat timbo until I literally collapsed with exhaustion. As I lay on my back and panted, I wondered if they would try to force me back to work. But they merely glanced at me and took over my work. They asked nothing more of me that day and even gave me something to eat, which they rarely did. The snack consisted of crushed Brazil nuts and roasted insect larvae.

Although adult Cinta Largas had by now accepted our presence, and even come into our camp, for days at a time we had only boys as visitors. Was this by design, we wondered? Were these little hellions sent to test the limits of our tolerance?

Whatever they wanted, they took. If anything annoyed them, they broke it. They climbed at will into our hammocks. They refused our food, but sat on our tables while we ate, their feet everywhere but in

(Continued on page 440)

When words are strangers, faces say it all. Smiling visitors gather around Apoena Meireles after presenting him with a small capuchin monkey; another pet clings to an Indian's arm. Man at left was shorn with scissors, a gift of the expedition; sharp slivers of bamboo are the usual barber tools.



Displaying a skill born of constant practice, 10-year-old Pazlababéta takes



EKTACHROME © NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

aim with his longbow. His arrow split a matchbox target twenty yards away.



Wilderness waltz: A singing, prancing Cinta Larga, wearing an ornamental nose plug (above), joins 12-year-old Raimundo Fortunato in an impromptu dance. Children of expedition *caboclos*—people of mixed European and Indian blood—helped break the ice in early contacts with the Cinta Largas. Families of expedition members move into camps in Indian territory to avoid the appearance of hostility.

Armadillo for dinner: Indians roast the armored beast on a grill of sticks at the camp's edge (opposite). One young tribesman greets an expedition member with the open affection that marked the Cinta Largas' final acceptance of their new friends.

Warrior and baby-sitter (below), young Takanine fashions a headband for a little *civilizado*, the brother of Raimundo. By age 12, Cinta Larga boys take on the role of adults—hunting and helping to protect villages. Shifting for themselves, groups of two or three wander for days through the vast forest, where jaguars and wild pigs are an ever-present danger.



KODACHROME (LEFT) AND EKTACHROMES © N.G.S.



our plates. They made off with a small pet monkey and a rooster. For a long time afterward, we heard the bird crow each morning in the nearby forest.

They even tried to kidnap the handsome young wife of one of our workers, but the girl, a *cabocla*, or mixed European-Indian, put them to astonished flight with a shrill verbal torrent. Progress on the airstrip we were building near the camp was interrupted when the Indians took all the tools, even while work was under way.

Discipline Comes in a Bug-spray Can

When the boys brought bows to camp and aimed arrows at us if we denied them anything, we knew the time had come to risk asserting ourselves.

I am a little ashamed of the way I "tamed" Takanine, an exceptionally bright youth. Still, he was prying at my tape recorder with an arrow and would not stop. (Primitive Indians, in my experience, often believe mechanical devices to be living creatures.)

I shouted at Takanine and reached for his arrow. He reached for his bow. I seized a can of insect repellent and sprayed it at a lighted candle. The inflammable repellent ignited with a flash. Takanine departed for the forest at speed. When he returned, he was highly respectful, and remained so for days.

With this and other tricks, we gradually brought the lads under a semblance of control. To our relief, the adults made no objections to our tactics, and even backed us up a time or two.

The days lengthened into weeks, the weeks into months. We learned many things about these Indians. Their senses of smell, hearing, and sight, for example, were extraordinary.

The jungle people could spot a bird or small monkey high in the forest canopy when we could see nothing. One day, as we waited on the finished airstrip for a plane, they pointed excitedly at the sky minutes before we could hear anything. Sure enough, the plane eventually appeared.

On another occasion a Cinta Larga sniffed a trailside bush and told Macurap, our expedition's chief hunter, that a tapir had just passed by. It was a young female, he indicated.

Macurap set forth with his rifle. An hour later he was back carrying a small tapir on his shoulders—a female.

In time the Indians lost their initial fear of such things as our flashlights, firearms, and generator. They sampled our food eventually, but disliked most of it.

They told us each others' names; a man would never say his own, so far as we could discover. They learned ours, though they seemed not to like "Jesco." They called me something that sounded like "Borbula."

One red-letter day a large group of Indians all painted and dressed as if for a ceremony came to see us, and with them were three women, the very first we had seen (opposite). They wore necklaces of dyed nutshells and almost nothing else. Though demure, they were unabashed and headed directly for our kitchen. The cook was delighted and showed them around. But his smile faded when the ladies departed with all the pots and pans they could carry.

Time and the Golden Rule Help

Despite the presence of the women, we knew our task with the Cinta Largas was far from finished. We felt that they only tolerated rather than liked us. And they were suspicious: Every visiting adult group contained a few men who kept bows and arrows at the ready and watched our every move.

But with each passing day they relaxed a tiny bit more and treated us with more kindness and consideration. The golden rule was working for us: They imitated our manners toward them.

Unfortunately, their new boldness reached beyond Seventh of September Camp. In Riozinho they openly raided settlers' vegetable gardens. They visited a diamond camp and asked for Apoena and Borbula. When they began appearing on the new highway, road crews and truck drivers fled in terror.

"Now we must complete our job, for this is the time of greatest danger in any pacification," said Chico Meireles. "A terrified truck driver, a drunken diamond prospector, an angry settler could easily touch off a war in which many lives would be lost.

"But the Cinta Largas stand in far more

Stylishly clad in painted "clothing," a feminine contingent arrives. Expedition members felt the women's presence marked a new level of confidence. Impressed by their poise, the author named them the "Three Graces." The camp cook was less than pleased when the visitors made off with many of his kitchen utensils.





Bright with beads and feathers, a group of Cinta Largas visits the camp. Word of



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expedition gifts may have drawn Chief Dikimoi, second Indian from left, to claim a share.



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Cloaked in forest, veiled by smoke, the secrets of a Cinta Larga village remain hidden. Ten minutes away by air, team members await the invitation that will allow them to enter one of 22 such compounds they have sighted.

danger than we. Through their new contacts with *civilizados*, they can catch our diseases and die like flies.

"It is the time now to enter the villages and cement the peace forever. And only there can we inoculate and vaccinate, and undertake the studies that must be made to assure these people a place in the future."

We have not yet entered a village, however, although we have tried in every possible way to gain an invitation. Twice we believed ourselves invited, but each time discovered we were not welcome.

Once Takanine and some other boys, using sign language and the small vocabulary we now had in common, clearly asked us to come home with them. Nearing the village, we were suddenly surrounded by warriors who shouted angrily at the boys and warned us to go no farther. The night before this futile hike, we had heard a large jaguar coughing near the camp. I think Takanine and his friends feared the beast and wanted our company through the forest next day!

On another occasion we understood Noára to have invited us. He offered no guides, and we set out on our own. After a few miles we found the trail unmistakably closed with nylon fishing line I had given the Indians.

I write these words from my home in

Goiânia, near Brasília. My jungle gear is all packed and waiting on my front porch. When I hear that a visit to a Cinta Larga village has been arranged, I shall go at once.

With luck, I shall record the first entry into the village in words and photographs. Meanwhile, I have news both good and bad from Seventh of September Camp.

The good word is that the Cinta Largas are showing unmistakable friendship for the FUNAI people. Apoena, who is a pilot, probably brought this about by taking three very brave youths on a flight to Pôrto Velho, capital of the territory. There a unit of the Brazilian Army was kind enough to parade in honor of these emissaries from the forest.

"The young men conducted themselves with a dignity that won the respect of all who saw them," writes Apoena. "I wish I could have watched as later they recounted their experiences to their people!"

As for the bad news, we have heard that influenza has swept through Cinta Larga country. How bad it was we do not know.

We have medical teams standing by, but we can do nothing until we are invited. Nothing, that is, except pray that we will not be too late, that the intrusion of civilization has not already doomed another primitive people to extinction. □

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