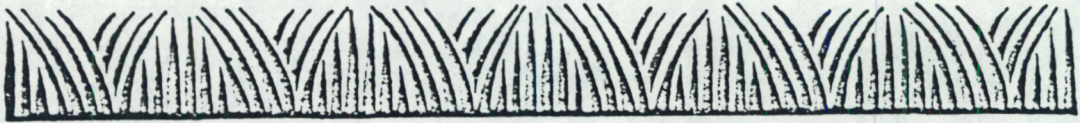


Action Alert For the Kaiapo People of Brazil



Background

All over the World Indigenous peoples face cultural extinction as "civilization" encroaches on their lands. Invariably these people are displaced and dispossessed because we covet their lands for luxuries. The rights of these people are abused as we pursue even greater economic wealth.

Historically the Amazon Basin had 7 million people in over 230 tribes. Today there are only 200,000 people, and over a 100 tribes are already extinct. The culture, rights, and lives of these people continue to be threatened.

In the Amazon the mineral rights to 34% of Indigenous lands have already been sold, without the knowledge or consent of the owners. A typical land dispute in March of 1988 left 13 Ticuna Indians killed and 23 wounded, including women and children. Our policy towards Indigenous peoples has been thinly veiled as "progress" and "development", but it is still genocide.

Hydroelectric Projects and Development

In an effort to raise the hard currency necessary to pay for their huge debts many Developing Nations are industrializing as quickly as possible. To provide the energy for this industrialization they are building massive hydroelectric projects. Brazil is planning 136 new dams under the Plano 2010 Power Sector Plan alone. Most of these projects are so poorly conceived that they are environmental disasters, completely degrading the forests, fields, and fisheries of the watershed. The poor who were supposed to benefit from this "development" suffer the most. The Altamira Complex is a typical example of a disaster in the making.

The Altamira Complex

The Complex involves 5 dams on the Xingu River and its tributaries. This would flood 18,000 sq km of rainforest, an area half the size of Nova Scotia. This project will affect the lands of 12 tribes and displace 75,000 people. This region also has an unusually high concentration of rare and endangered species.

The World Bank

Pressure from many organizations concerned with the environment, human rights, development, and social justice has resulted in changes at the World Bank. In an effort to avoid criticism and responsibility the World Bank no longer funds specific projects. Funding is provided for whole economic sectors, and it is left to the borrower to decide which projects to fund.

Naturally the World Bank knows precisely what the borrower intends to do with the money, and often actively participates in the planning. The World Bank knows that Brazilian economic planning is geared towards development of hydro-power in the Amazon Basin, and that funds from the Plano 2010 loan will be used to help finance it. Despite this the Bank still claims that "the World Bank has not financed and does not intend to finance hydro-power projects in the Amazon."

The World Bank requires that the borrower country prepare an Environmental Master Plan, and one has been prepared for the Altamira complex. Even the World Bank considers the Environmental Master Plan to be inadequate. The Bank is critical of the Master Plan because:

- 1) the resettlement and regional planning guidelines are deficient.
- 2) the guidelines on Indigenous peoples are neither specific nor complete.
- 3) guidelines on pollution and threatened wildlife are not ready.
- 4) there has not been adequate local representation.

Despite these reservations the World Bank intends to pursue the Plano 2010 Power Sector Loan.

