

By Joel Bleifuss

Third World blight

Last year Davison L. Budhoo resigned from his position as an economist at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the 151-nation intergovernmental economic agency. He then set out to "enlighten public opinion" about the IMF's role and operations in the Third World. His first act of enlightenment was a 150-page letter of resignation to IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus. The letter began: "Dear Mr. Camdessus: Today I resigned from the staff of the IMF after over 12 years, and 1,000 days of official Fund work in the field, hawking your medicines and your bag of tricks to governments and to people in Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa. To me resignation is a priceless liberation, for with it I have taken the first big step to that place where I may hope to wash my hands of what in my mind's eye is the blood of millions of poor and starving peoples. Mr. Camdessus, the blood is so much, you know, it runs in rivers. It dries up too; it cakes all over me; sometimes I feel there is not enough soap in the whole world to cleanse me from the things that I did in your name..." The letter goes on to detail instances of IMF corruption, self-interest and deceit. In an interview with Anthony Swift in *The New Internationalist*, a monthly published in Oxford, England, Budhoo discussed the origins of the IMF. "The IMF was never designed to help the Third World or end poverty," he said. "It was established by the Bretton Woods conference of 1944 to restore economic and financial order to the Western world. There was no element of compassion for humanity in its formulation. The Fund's aim is first and foremost to secure the interests of developed countries." **Guns not butter:** One of the institutions that helps "secure the interests of developed countries" is a healthy military-industrial complex. The IMF has never suggested that a country cut its defense spending, police force or public-control budget, said Budhoo. Instead, it is basic services and price subsidies for the poor that always end up on the chopping block. Budhoo explained, "It's one thing to push around countries and say, 'OK you have to treat the poor that way.' But with the arms industry you are talking about very powerful people—both inside and outside the country. They won't be pushed around. They are supposed to be among those who benefit. With the U.S. being an IMF shareholder and with the staff taking its cue from the U.S., who is the IMF to tell a country to limit its arms expenditure? You can tell them to let people die, but not to limit their arms." For example, according to a 1987 UNICEF study, the IMF required one-third of the countries it helped in the early '80s to reduce government food subsidies. In some cases the result was a dramatic increase in child malnutrition.

Heritage Foundation— an unregistered foreign agent?

The South Korean National Assembly's investigation of wholesale corruption in the government of former South Korean dictator Chun Doo Hwan may have turned up some dirt on a key ally of the Reagan-Bush administration. The former South Korean intelligence director, Chang Se Tong, testified last November that his agency, the KCIA, gave money in the early '80s to the right-wing Heritage Foundation of Washington, D.C. Perhaps not coincidentally, in 1982 the Heritage Foundation set up the Asian Studies Center, which then welcomed as its first fellow one of President Chun's closest advisers, Gen. Huh Wha Pyung, a former director of military intelligence. In his testimony Chang refused to say if the Heritage Foundation was given \$2.2 million—the figure mentioned on a government document uncovered by National Assembly investigators. The Washington-based North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea notes: "U.S. law requires organizations that receive major funding or policy direction from any foreign entity to register with the Justice Department as a foreign agent. No record of the Heritage Foundation registration could be located."

Undercover dicks

An underreported news story of 1988 was Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's crackdown on sanitary code scofflaws. One day last June undercover environmental health agents arrested six men for failing to flush public urinals. A Singapore newspaper



Martyred labor leader Chico Mendes with daughter Elenira and son Sandino.

Chico Mendes: rubber tapper, union leader and environmentalist

Francisco "Chico" Mendes Filho, 44, had survived six previous assassination attempts. But on the evening of Dec. 22, 1988, in the river town of Xapuri in Brazil's remote western state of Acre, a hired gun of Brazilian landowners put a bullet through Chico Mendes' chest as he went to bathe in his backyard outhouse.

Mendes, president of the 70,000-member National Rubber Tappers Union, had become famous for his militant defense of the Amazon rain forest and its traditional inhabitants. In the violent backdrop of the Amazon frontier, Mendes' work had earned him the U.N.'s "Global 500" environmental award in 1987. It also made him a marked man.

Mendes' primary concern was less the "greenhouse effect" than the "human effect"—the impact of deforestation on his fellow *seringueiros*, or rubber tappers.

At the age of seven, Mendes learned to tap the wild trees for rubber latex and to hunt for food. "Every day I would wake at four in the morning, make a big pot of coffee and prepare a meal of manioc flour and deer or monkey meat," Mendes once recalled. "Then at 5:30 I would put on my work clothes, pick up my machete and shotgun, and set off on one of the trails into the forest. The dawn is party time for all the animals in the forest, and I would hunt. Then it would take me about four hours to complete the rubber trail, tapping into each tree on the way and placing the little cups to catch the rubber."

The forest provided Mendes' only education until he met a dissident army officer who had fled to the jungle following the 1964 military coup. The officer, who began tapping

rubber near Mendes, took a liking to the youth and taught him reading, writing and, according to Mendes, "the principles behind trade unionism."

In the '70s Mendes began to challenge the exploitation of the *seringueiros* by rubber merchants, land speculators and cattle barons. The Brazilian government had begun cutting a road into Acre, and cattle ranchers and land speculators from southern Brazil moved in, slashing and burning vast sections of the forest. Often the rubber tappers would return home at the end of the day only to find a pile of ashes. On what was once lush jungle, the ranchers then grazed the cattle that would help North Americans satisfy their craving for fast-food hamburgers.

Opposition to this environmental and human destruction was fostered by the left wing of the Catholic Church that brought in union organizers to help train the rubber tappers. Mendes became the first general secretary of the first rural union formed in Acre. As such he pressed for a closer alliance between Acre's rubber tappers and other exploited groups in the state, including small farmers and Indians. During military rule Mendes was arrested and tortured three times.

For the past 10 years, Mendes and the rubber tappers have tried to protect their rain forests through non-violent actions called *empates* (standoffs). During these acts of civil disobedience the rubber tappers would come with their entire family to confront the chainsaw crews that cleared the forest for the ranchers.

In April 1988 workers cutting the forest for two ranchers, Darli and Alvarino Alves, fired on a group of rubber tappers staging an *empeate*. Two people were wounded. To head off further violence Acre's governor declared the area an "extractive reserve." This became the first forest area to be officially protected for the

tappers.

The idea of extractive reserves was born in Mendes' hometown of Xapuri. There, communities of rubber tappers, faced with plummeting world rubber prices, had gradually established semiautonomous areas for tapping not only rubber latex but other forest resources that required no clearcutting: Brazil nuts, chicle nuts, palm fiber, and medicinal plants and oils.

It was Mendes' effective organizing in the fight for extractive reserves that cost him his life, for it threatened Acre's land speculators and ranchers who stake claim to land by clearing the forest and planting pasture—a process that leaves the Amazon soil unproductive after a few years' use.

Mendes is one of many Brazilians who have been slain in land disputes. According to Amnesty International, since 1980 more than 1,000 rural workers have been killed by paramilitary forces that are organized by ranchers.

But in a larger sense, these assassinated rural organizers and the dwindling rain forests are victims of an international banking system that forces Third World countries to emphasize short-term gains at the expense of both the poor and the environment. The Brazilian government subsidizes deforestation of the Amazon to promote agricultural exports that bring in foreign exchange to help pay the \$120 billion foreign debt.

Soon after the April 1988 *empeate* that foiled the Alves brothers' claims to the land, it became common knowledge that the ranchers had placed a bounty on Mendes' head. It was not a threat Mendes took lightly. In an interview just before his death, Mendes denounced a conspiracy against his life that he said included both the Alves brothers and the regional superintendent of Acre's federal police. The two brothers are now wanted by the police.

With his martyrdom, Mendes has attained in Brazil a stature comparable to that of Martin Luther King in the U.S. After one attempt on his life, Mendes told friends. "We know that there are powerful enemies ahead—

enemies with the power of capital—the large landowners that have dominated this country since its discovery. But if the ranchers think that killing one person will stop our struggle, they are wrong."

At Mendes' funeral service, the head of a rural workers union vowed: "Not one more tree will be cut down in Acre."

—Glen Switkes and Linda Rabben

Brazil puts ecologically minded Indian chiefs and U.S. anthropologist on trial

The Brazilian government is prosecuting two Indian chiefs and an American anthropologist for speaking out against development in the Amazon. But their trial has become an embarrassment for Brazil, coming on the heels of President Jose Sarney's October declaration that his government would move to halt the headlong destruction of the rain forest.

Brazilian federal police have charged two Kaiapo chiefs, Kube-i and Paiakan, and one 41-year-old Kentucky anthropologist, Darrell Posey, with breaking a law that bars foreigners from interfering in Brazil's domestic affairs.

The charges stem from a February 1988 trip the three made to Washington, D.C., to lobby against a \$500 million World Bank loan that Indians and environmentalists claim would enable the government to build what would be Brazil's largest hydroelectric project. The project would be a series of dams that would flood a vast jungle valley and displace thousands of Indians.

The trial marks the first time Indians have been prosecuted as aliens in Brazil. It is also the first time the "foreigners statute," originally enacted by a military government, has been used since Brazil returned to civilian rule in 1985. Conviction carries a one- to three-year sentence or expulsion from the country.

The venue is the colonial city of Belem, the capital of the jungle state of Para, at the mouth of the Amazon River 1,000 miles north of Brazilia.

Chief Kube-i arrived at his latest court appearance in October with an entourage of 400 Kaiapo warriors in ceremonial battle dress: red and black war paint, mussel-shell necklaces, beaded arm bands and cotton gym shorts—the modern day substitute for the traditional penis sheath.

The warriors danced, sang and shot arrows into a mango tree outside the courthouse as Kube-i went to testify before federal Judge Iran Velasco do Nascimento. But the judge refused to allow the disrespectfully dressed chief to enter the court and postponed the trial until the spring. In the meantime, he ordered court psychologists to assess the Kaiapo's level of integration into modern Brazilian society.

Chief Paiakan said Kube-i and he traveled to the U.S. "to defend the



Chief Paiakan addresses a meeting of the Brazilian Indian Movement.

rain forest and the people who live here. We are the first Brazilians. We are the ones who must guard the forest for the whole world." Anthropologist Posey was the chiefs' translator during meetings with congressional leaders, World Bank directors, Treasury and State Department officials, environmental groups and North American Indian organizations.

Kube-i and Paiakan complained bitterly of not being consulted, or even kept informed, of the Brazilian government's decision to build a massive hydroelectric project on the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon located about 300 miles from Belem. They said the project would inundate more than 19 million acres of remote forest and displace at least 8,500 Indians, among them thousands of Kaiapo.

The government has sought to quell the growing international criticism of Brazil's rain forest policies. In October President Sarney announced measures to slow the rapid destruction of the Amazon rain forest. But Brazil still suffers a lack

of both the political will and the means to protect its environment. In September the frustrated head of Brazil's environment agency, Roberto Messias Franco, resigned saying the government "pulled the rug from under me."

Moreover, according to Posey, the government Indian agency, FUNAI, allows illegal mining and logging operations to encroach on protected reservations. Posey said FUNAI has also expelled all of his closest colleagues from Indian territories throughout the Amazon. And he said his own research on medicinal plants is "paralyzed" because he is prohibited from working in any Indian area as long as the case is pending.

After the October hearing, the Kaiapo warriors vowed that if any of the three defendants were expelled, authorities would need an airplane big enough to carry them all away. Then the men began their journey home, 15 hours by bus and bush plane to the Xingu River where their clearings dot a forest that once seemed endless. —Jon Christensen

A Kaiapo warrior in full battle regalia.



the *Straits Times* explained, "Failure to flush the urinal after use is considered a public nuisance under the Penal Code Chapter 224." The crime carries a fine of up to \$100. The *Straits Times* article, "Environmental Health Officers: The Unsung Heroes of a Dirty Job," reported how the plainclothed unit of sanitary police got their men. They took "turns going into the toilet and while washing their hands or pretending to use the urinal, kept an eye out for litterbugs, vandals and other abusers." And on the same day that the six were arrested, a Singapore judge fined a man \$75 for urinating in an elevator. The man was apprehended after the elevator jammed. According to the *Strait Times* his unauthorized activity caused the elevator's "urine sensor to activate the janining mechanism." He was convicted on the basis of a video tape recording of the event taken by a hidden camera.

Native sons

It is sometimes good to be reminded that anti-Zionism was not always equated with anti-Semitism. Peter Gay reports in his new book, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, that in 1930 Albert Einstein wrote Sigmund Freud asking him what he thought of Zionism. Freud replied: "I don't believe that Palestine will ever become a Jewish state and that the Christian and the Islamic world will ever be prepared to leave their shrines in Jewish hands. It would have seemed more comprehensible to me to found a Jewish fatherland on new, historically unencumbered soil." Gay writes that Freud went on to say that such a "rational attitude" would never enlist "the enthusiasm and the resources of the rich," and that he regretted seeing the "unrealistic fanaticism" of his fellow Jews awaken the suspicions of the Arabs. Said Freud, "I can muster no sympathy for the misguided piety that makes a national religion from a piece of the wall of Herod and for its sake challenges the feelings of the local natives."

Victims of unrequited lust

In the wake of reports that the South African military engages in the illegal trade of elephant ivory ("In Short," Nov. 23), two members of the South African military and three U.S. citizens have now been indicted in Connecticut for trafficking in machine guns, black rhinoceros horns and leopard and cheetah skins. Todd Steiner and Susan Elan report to *In These Times* that these indictments follow an eight-month federal investigation. According to the U.S. Justice Department, the two officers of the elite South African Defense Forces obtained 14 rhinoceros horns from South African troops in Angola. The South Africans transported the horns to Namibia via military vehicles. They were subsequently shipped to the U.S., where John Lukman of Newington, Conn., one of the Americans indicted, sold one of the horns to an undercover agent for \$40,000. Trade in black rhino horns is banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species that is signed by both the U.S. and South Africa. Only 4,000 black rhinos survive today, down from 65,000 in 1970. Powdered rhino horn, selling at \$450 per ounce in the U.S. and as high as \$1,000 in the Mideast and Eastern Asia, is one of the world's most sought-after aphrodisiacs.

In memory of Jessie Lloyd O'Connor

Labor journalist Jessie Lloyd O'Connor, a longtime *In These Times* supporter, died on Christmas Eve in Little Compton, R.I., after a short illness. She was 84. Born on St. Valentine's Day 1904 to a wealthy and radical Chicago family, Lloyd O'Connor dedicated her life to the left. Upon graduation from Smith College, she embarked for Europe where she covered the British general strike, the League of Nations and the progress of the Russian Revolution for the Federated Press, a labor news service. She fell in love with and married her editor Harvey O'Connor. They spent the next half century in the trenches of left politics, a life that is recounted in their dual autobiography *Harvey and Jessie: A Couple of Racials* (see *In These Times*, Nov. 16, 1988). Lloyd O'Connor is remembered for several gems of wisdom, including "Compromise if you can, but fight if you must." A firm believer in the need for a left press, Jesse was one of *In These Times*' first sustainers, helping us through more than a few tight periods. She is survived by son Stephen L. O'Connor and daughter Kathleen M. O'Connor as well as three grandchildren, two brothers, one sister and one aunt.