

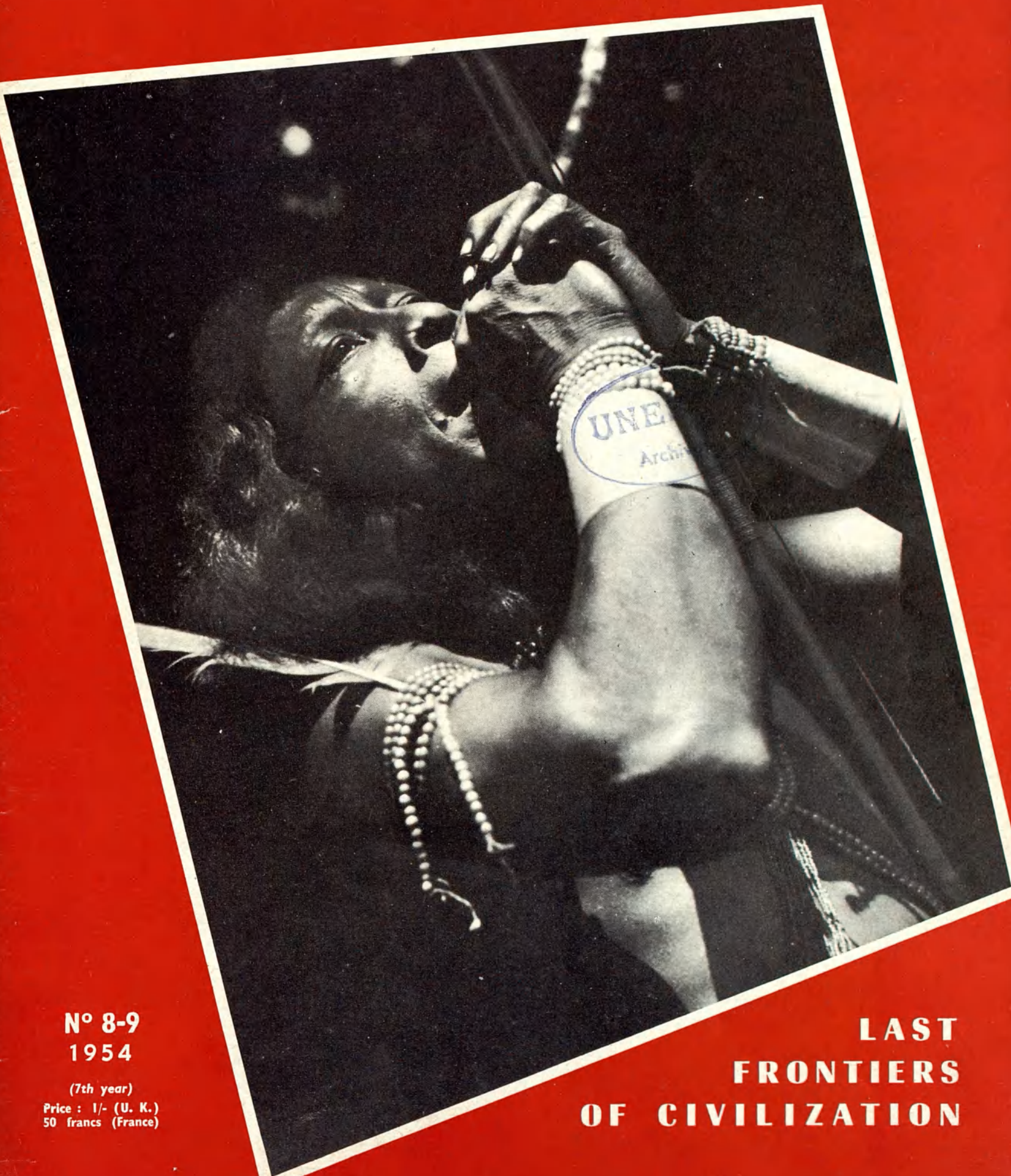
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The



Courier

A WINDOW OPEN ON THE WORLD



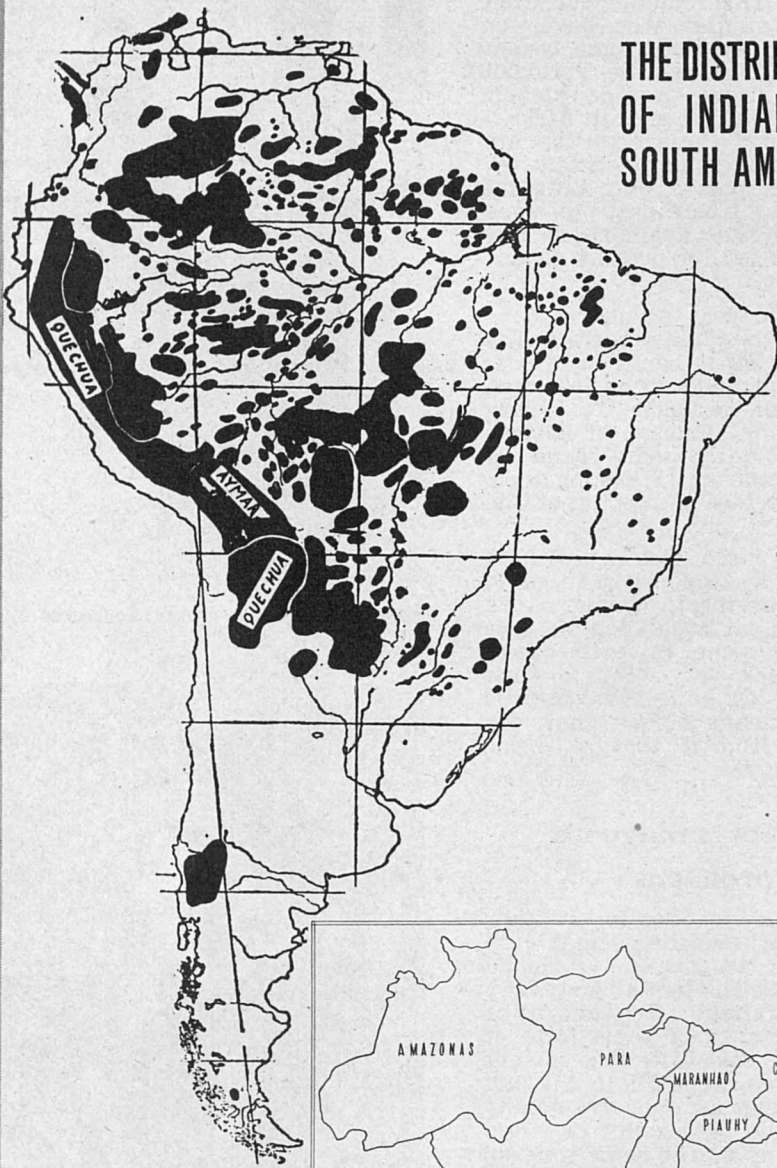
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LAST
FRONTIERS
OF CIVILIZATION

THE DISTRIBUTION OF INDIANS IN SOUTH AMERICA



From "Indigenous Peoples" Published By I.L.O.

DISTRIBUTION OF BRAZIL'S INDIAN POPULATION BY STATES

State	Number of Indians	State	Number of Indians
Mato Grosso	500,000	Maranhão, Espírito Santo, Bahia and	
Acre	300,000	Minas Gerais	10,000
Amazonas	200,000	Paraná	10,000
Pará	100,000	Santa Catarina	10,000
Goiás	100,000	Rio Grande do Sul	2,600
		São Paulo	2,170

BRAZIL : GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES

State	Number of tribes	State	Number of tribes
Amazonas and Acre Territory	108	Paraíba	1
Bahia	2	Paraná	1
Goiás	9	Pernambuco	1
Maranhão	10	Rio Grande do Sul	1
Mato Grosso	79	Santa Catarina	1
Minas Gerais	3	São Paulo	3
Pará	22	Espírito Santo	6

BRASIL is a country where primitive Indian tribes still live next to huge modern metropolises. Brazil is a country of violent contrasts, contrasts arising both from her enormous area and the uneven rate at which regions within this area have been progressively developed.



General Rondon

The Brazilians themselves say that, when you travel in the direction of the setting sun in their country, you journey backwards through time. Sooner or later, you are bound to meet forgotten centuries.

Even today, the Brazil of the prairies and unexplored jungles is only beginning to be integrated into the life of the nation. This Brazil is an ever-moving frontier and it marks the progress which has been made by Brazilian society in what amounts to the conquest of its own territory.

This is a borderland where Indians and the forces of civilization face each other under much the same conditions as those of the first meeting of Europe and America. At times, the clash is even more violent than it was in the past—for it has now been heightened by centuries of bloody conflict.

The Indian who sees an outsider move onto the territory of his tribe is convinced that there is no hope of any agreement. From tradition and personal experience he has learned that he can expect nothing but the worst...

by
Darcy Ribeiro

and that he has no other course but to defend his rights.

The pioneer, opening up new grazing lands or jungle areas, looks upon this soil as his own. He resents the Indian and he is suspicious of him. The attitudes of both sides being what they are, it is no great wonder that a fight is inevitable.

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, Indians who dared to resist an invasion of their territory were hunted down like wild beasts. Vast regions only a few days' journey by horseback from big cities such as Sao Paulo, Vitoria, Ilheus or Blumenau lay untouched because they were battlegrounds for whites and Indians.

Entire tribes were wiped out. Gangs of professional killers hired themselves out to local governments or colonization companies to massacre Indians and make room for European settlers.

The fate of the Indians who lived peacefully in contact with white civilization was no less tragic. They were treated mercilessly and frequently they were thrown off their land if it proved to be of any value. When they could be used in any way as a source of labour, they were ruthlessly exploited, often reduced to slavery and stripped of their most elementary rights. Their women and children were playthings of village tyrants.

But as the advancing frontier pushed

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THE SOLDIER WHO WOULDN'T SHOOT 'DIE IF YOU MUST BUT NEVER KILL AN INDIAN'

the Indian further and further away from Brazil's large towns, a new attitude took form in the minds of the distant city-dwellers. The Indian became a romantic figure, resembling one of Rousseau's "good savages" and a flood of poems and novels began to sing his praise.

This, of course, did not stop the frontier settlers from painting him as black as possible so that the great Indian hunt could go on with some sort of justification.

The beginning of the 20th Century saw an increase in world demand for rubber and other tropical jungle products. This led to the invasion of the last of the land where the Indian remained unmolested. New conflicts between whites and Indians sprang up and new massacres followed. But, this time, an aroused public opinion

brought pressure to bear on the government to put an end to the slaughter.

It is against this background of violence and murder that the figure of a young soldier first appeared. Soon, the eyes of the entire country were to be on him.

This officer, assigned to build a telegraph line linking the Brazilian coast with the country's western border, had adopted a new policy towards the Indians. He wanted to demonstrate that it was possible to pacify even the most hostile tribes merely by persuasion.

His troops had to push through regions occupied by the most feared Indians of the interior, regions where no white man had ever dared venture. They did go through, systematically winning the Indians' confidence and with never an act of violence.

The man behind this miracle was Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon. He had been a professor of mathematics and astronomy at Brazil's military college until the day, a few years previously, when he decided to find a humanitarian way of using the troops under his command.

Rondon was a "positivist"—for the driving force behind this epic of the Brazilian jungle was the philosophy of the French thinker, Auguste Comte. Putting positivism into practice meant leading an armed expedition through territory occupied by hostile tribes without ever authorizing the use of arms, even under attack... and all of this in the name of an abstract principle of justice.

Rondon became the head of a com-

(Continued on page 12)

OYANA INDIANS who live in the border areas between Brazil and the French and Dutch Guianas build circular homes whose frameworks are made from saplings bent over and tied with lianas. Nails and carpentry joints

are unknown there. Roofs and walls are made waterproof by an overlapping thatch of palm leaves. In a country as vast as Brazil the type of village house varies according to the region and the state of tribal development.



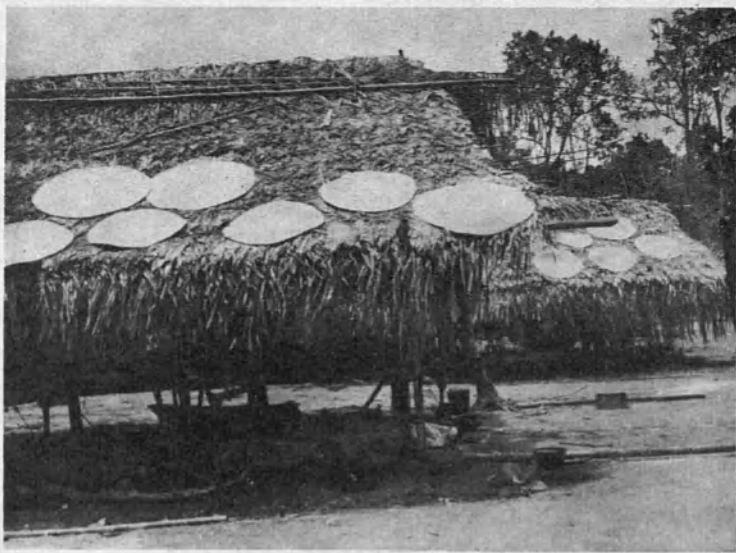
BRAZIL'S INDIANS (Cont'd.)



BASIC FURNITURE in the forest Indian's hut is the hammock whose suitability for sleeping in the tropics led Europeans to adopt it after their first contacts with the Indians, and a low stool or bench often carved in the shape of an animal. Woman in hammock is spinning cotton while her husband makes basket-work fish trap. Basketry is a masculine industry.



FOOD MAINSTAY of Brazilian Indians, as for all others in tropical South America, is manioc, one of a variety of root crops from which many dishes and drinks are prepared. In the cooking pots shown here, for example, manioc is being fermented to produce a strong drink generically called chicha. Before being used for cooking, the commonest kind, bitter manioc, is carefully processed to remove the prussic acid it contains.



SUN OVEN is a hut roof on which the manioc cakes are spread. Well-baked and dried these will keep for a long time. In addition to root crops nearly all tribes grow maize and cultivate many other plants for use as food, drugs or poisons. Certain plants when crushed in streams give out a sap which drugs fish without affecting their edible qualities in any way.

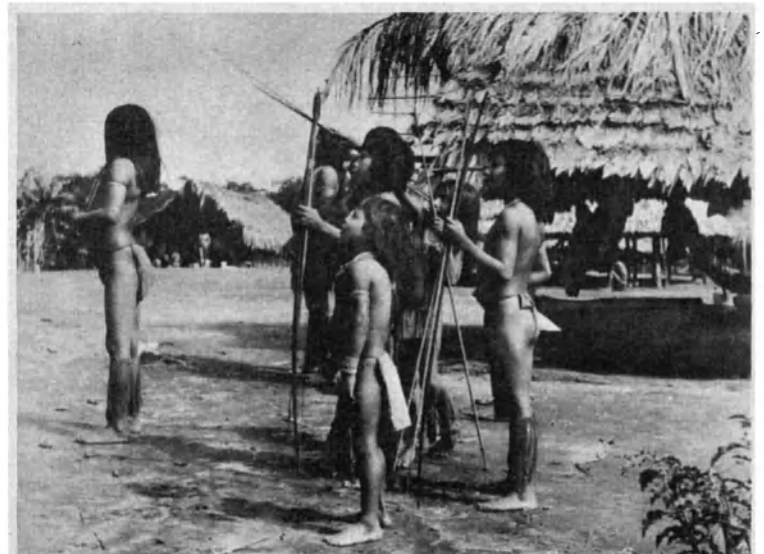
SCANTY CLOTHING worn by dwellers in the heat and humidity of tropical forests is compensated by a profusion of bodily decoration. Beads and rings are worn and body tattooing and painting are widespread. Feather decorations include crowns, frontlets, collars and cloaks. Feather headdress held by this young girl is also decorated with beetles wings.

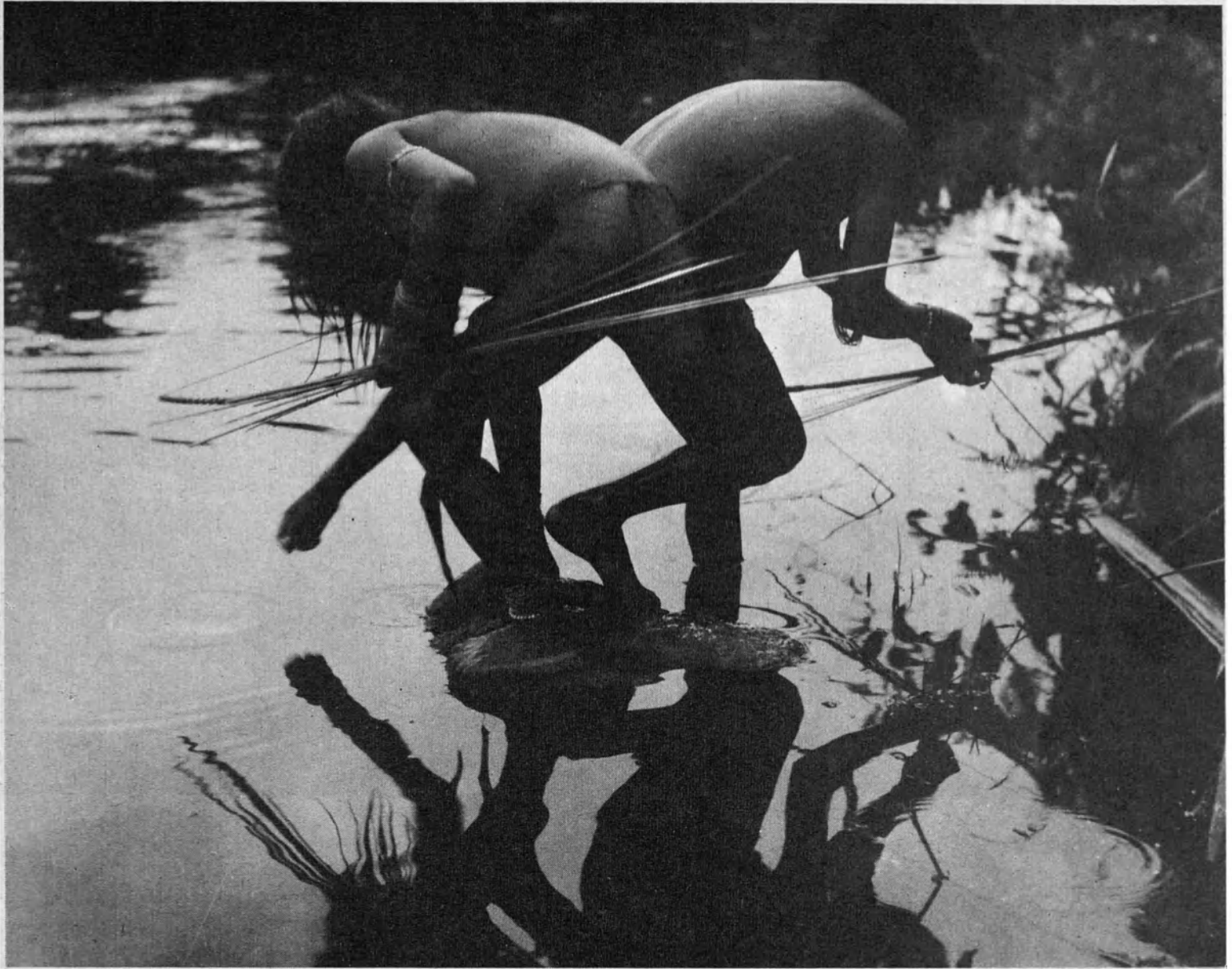


INDIAN KITCHEN is merely the centre of a roofed, but unenclosed hut. Here the manioc, purged of its poisonous prussic acid and now a starchy whitish powder, is either baked on a clay grid into thin flat cakes or stirred to produce small white crumbs, "farinha" pellets, like those of white bread. Meat or fish which would rapidly spoil in the humid climate are baked and smoke dried.

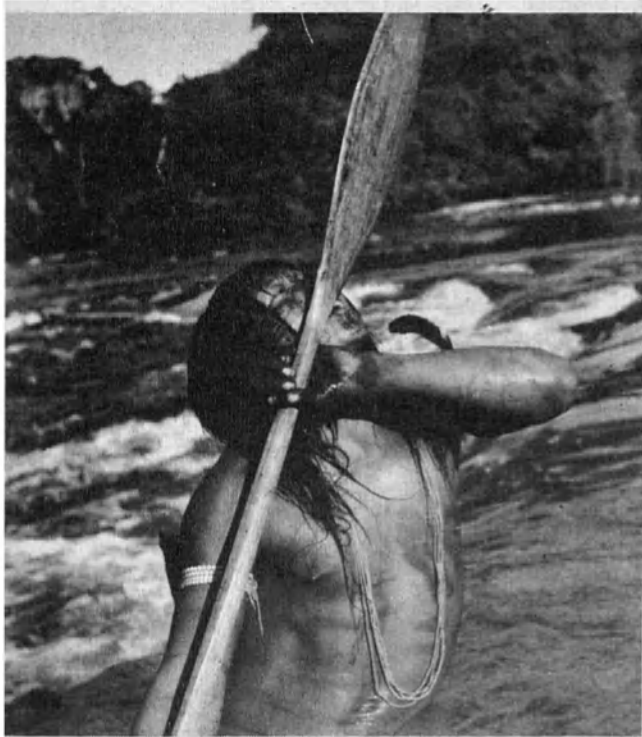


YOUNG HUNTERS have spotted an Ara, a macaw which though never eaten by Indians, is much prized for the plumes widely used for making ceremonial headdresses. The blowgun and bow are basic hunting weapons and several types of arrow heads are used including barbed for larger game and blunt ones for stunning birds.



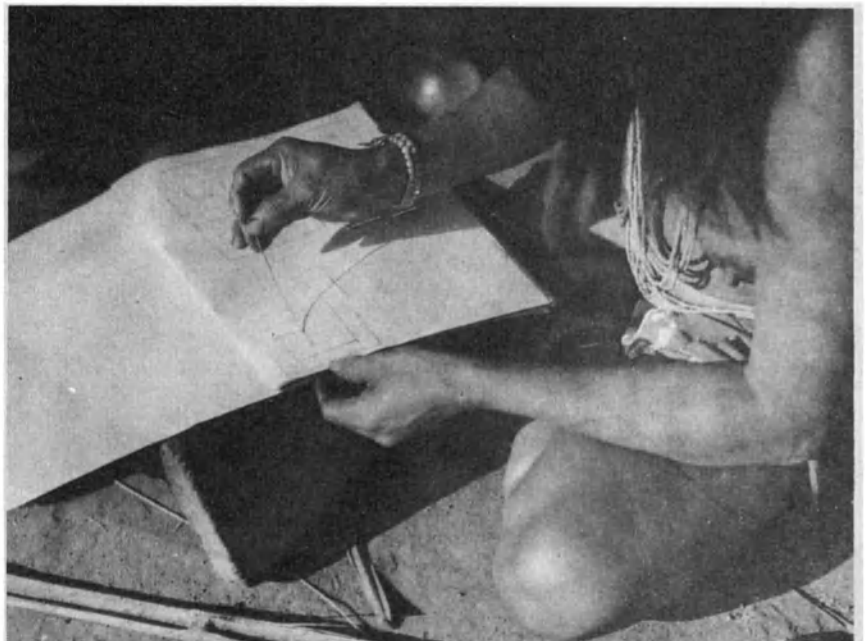


MOTIONLESS AS STATUES, TWO INDIANS PATIENTLY WAIT FOR THE FISH.

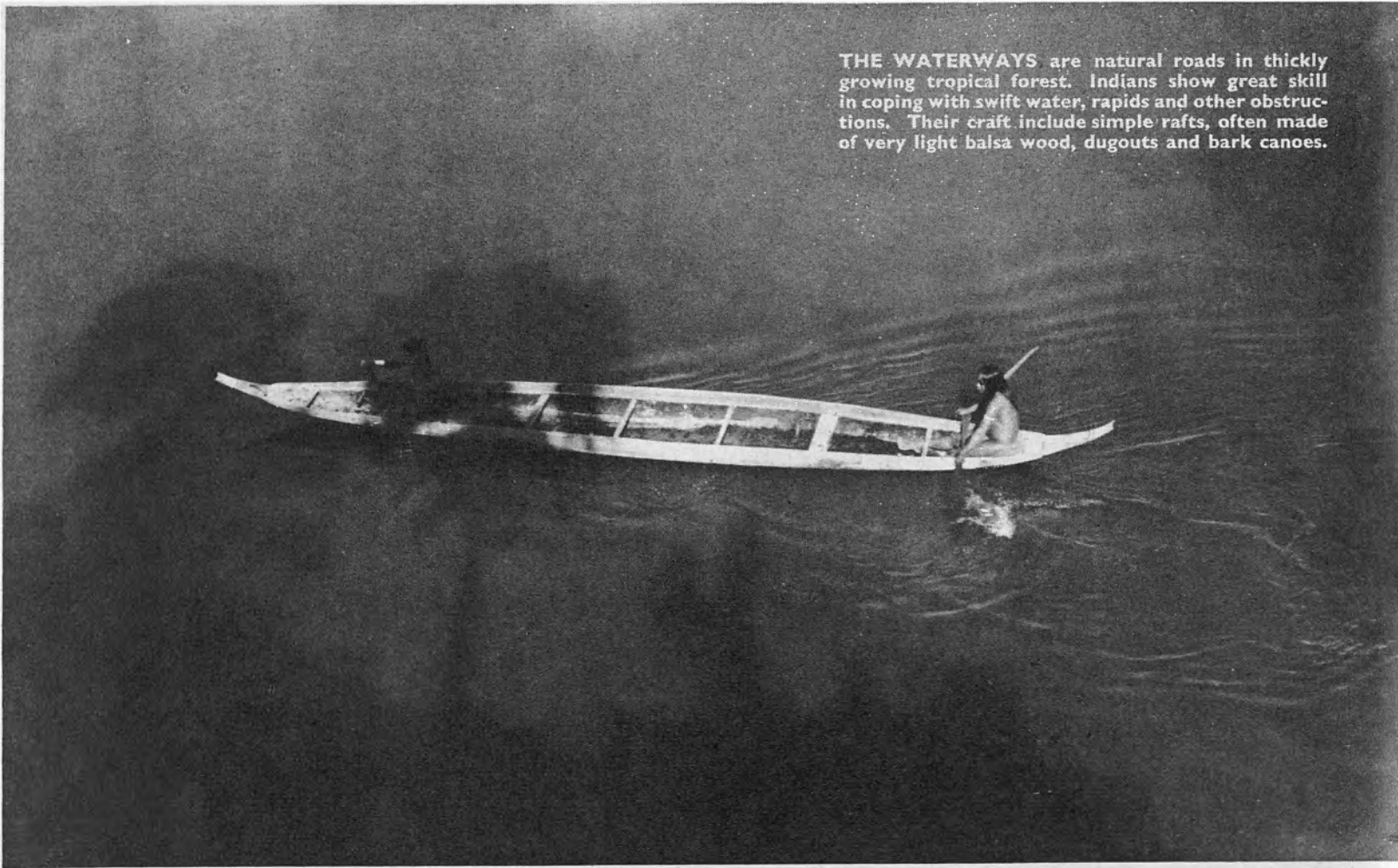


THIRSTY BOATMAN refreshes himself by letting water run down his paddle into his mouth. He is tattooed (a form of protection against malign influences) but like most Indians has removed all hair from his body, from above the eyes and from his lips and chin. Indians usually explain that they think hair is "ugly", but there is generally some underlying superstition to account for this custom.

ORNAMENTAL DESIGNS of human, animal and linear figures are used by Indians to decorate weapons, implements, vessels, clothes and their bodies. Here, using a twig and a liquid called "genipa" customarily employed for body painting, an Indian girl traces simple rectangular designs on paper supplied by the photographer.



THE WATERWAYS are natural roads in thickly growing tropical forest. Indians show great skill in coping with swift water, rapids and other obstructions. Their craft include simple rafts, often made of very light balsa wood, dugouts and bark canoes.



(Continued from page 9)

mission which set out to apply Comte's ideas to an army. Rondon's plan had three basic points: the peaceful use of troops to survey unknown regions, military construction of public works such as telegraph lines and, finally, the application of humanitarian principles such as the protection of the Indians.

In the cruel history of relations between primitives and civilization, it would be difficult to find a policy bearing such a stamp of generosity. Even the 16th century missionaries who brought the Gospel to the Indians of Brazil did not disdain to use the secular arm. On more than one occasion, they asked the aid of the army. But Rondon was the secular army personified. He was at the head of a conquering army, and he was able to make it an instrument which combined both wisdom and understanding.

His troops marched under his motto: "Die if you must, but never kill."

Twenty years of life in the jungle brought him into contact with many tribes, a good deal of them pacified by his men. These years gave Rondon precious experience in the problem of relations existing between Indians and Brazilians.

Eventually, he succeeded in training a team of men as conscious as he was of the complexity and the importance of Brazil's Indian problem. This school produced the first of the Brazilian "Indianists", men who had learned from Rondon that force should never be used, even to stand off an attack.

Above all, they learned that the most warlike of tribes might very well be peace-loving and willing to fraternize with white men—once they had been convinced that they were not dealing

with the usual sort of white men. In other words, the Indians had to be shown that civilization had a face other than the one with which they were all too familiar.

In 1910, when the Brazilian Government yielded to public opinion and decided to create an organization to protect the country's Indians, Rondon was immediately hailed as the best man to set it up. This was the birth of the *Serviço de Proteção aos Índios*, set up to carry out a realistic demographic policy: the preservation of a population indispensable to Brazil because it was already occupying vast areas of the country. This organization was also entrusted with bringing peace to regions torn by Indian-white conflicts.

It was understood that the service would be devoted exclusively to aiding the Indians and would abstain from any religious proselytizing. The law

setting up the service established the principle that the Indians would be respected as a people with the right to be themselves, to preserve their beliefs and to live as they wanted to live—that is, according to the traditions handed down to them by their ancestors.

This service heralded a new era for the Indians of Brazil. No longer were all customs, beliefs and institutions to be reduced to one all-inclusive standard or cast into a foreign mould. The new policy was based on what sociologists term "cultural relativism". In other words, there was a willingness to admit that certain conceptions of the supernatural and certain social customs could fulfil a useful purpose within the framework of a specific society.

Protection of Indians on their own land was another major objective. The service put an end to the old practice of forcing Indians to abandon their



FESTIVAL DRESS of Boro Indian includes feathers driven through the nose and ears and beads through the lower lip.

BRAZIL'S GENERAL RONDON — THE SOLDIER WHO WOULDN'T SHOOT

homes and eke out a miserable existence elsewhere. This method of "civilizing" Indians had been one of the main causes of tribal disorganization. Ripped loose from the surroundings where he had been raised and where he had learned to fight for life, the Indian could not meet his own needs and he had been faced with a choice of fleeing or submitting.

No longer would families be separated under the pretext of education or evangelization. Previously, the removal of children from the homes of their parents had been the cause of spectacular failures and bloody insurrections.

Traditions shattered

THIS practice had been widespread and justified by the hope of transforming new generations of Indians. Unfortunately, it only resulted in depriving Indians of an education which would have enabled them to learn how to meet their own conditions of existence. It also shattered tribal traditions essential to them for survival as a society.

Considering the period of his work, Rondon and the "positivist" policy of his service represented a big step forward—especially in view of the attitude of anthropologists and sociologists of the time. They were mainly interested in describing exotic customs and had little concern for the future of the people they were studying. The Indian was a sort of human fossil enabling them to shed light on the past.

Rondon's Bureau of Indian Affairs was established in Rio de Janeiro, with branches—*Inspetorias*—throughout the country and also a network of "Indian outposts." Each of these outposts represented a territory belonging to an Indian tribe which was assisted by government officials.

These officials were given the task of organizing Indian economic life, protecting the Indians from famine and, in general, raising their standard of living. In addition, government representatives were in charge of relations between their Indian community and the whites to prevent exploitation and to punish crimes which had been committed against the tribe.

If necessary, officials were empowered to intervene in quarrels among Indians—but only if the Indians had recourse to their authority after failing to settle the disputes under their own traditional system of justice.

106 outposts

FINALLY, Indians were given medical aid, mainly to protect them against diseases transmitted by white men. In short, outpost officials had the job of directing the entire process of assimilation of the Indian to avoid violent change which might harm his traditional way of life.

Sudden change often proves to be harmful when a primitive people cannot meet a new situation with its traditional ways of life—and when it has not yet been convinced that there are any valid reasons for changing the way of life it has always known.

Today, thousands of Indians live under the protection of 106 "outposts". Many of them would not have survived without Rondon's service assuring them possession of their land and the right to live according to their customs.

The service has always faced another problem—the pacification of hostile tribes. It has devoted itself to this task for forty years while Brazil has pushed back her frontier. The men who followed Rondon continued to use only persuasion and several of them paid with their lives for the faith they showed in the motto: "Die if you must, but never kill."

soap, metal tools, etc.—and that he has to work for wages to satisfy them. What chance does he have to meet these needs with the resources of his basically rural economy—an economy precarious even for Europeans? It is no wonder that the Indian often finds that his status is inferior to that of better equipped competitors who are adapted to a complex civilization.

Uprooted, the Indian may lose everything — even his will to live. He no longer feels secure in a changed world after having lived among men who shared his viewpoint and his philosophy. Among Indians, the loss of tra-



HUNTING PARTY of Oyampi Indians who inhabit the frontier lands of Brazil and French Guiana, returns to its village. In some tribes canoe hunters use a calabash to imitate the roar of the jaguar. Attracted by the call, the jaguar swims out to the canoe where it can easily be stunned with a club.

This policy has proved profitable for Brazil as well as for the Indians. Huge regions have been settled peacefully and integrated into the national economy. The service has no secret of success—other than the patience and the spirit of sacrifice which Rondon was able to awaken.

But what can be done with Indian tribes once they have been pacified? How can they be saved from the harmful influence of everyday contact with their onetime traditional enemies?

The loss of part of their territory is a hard economic blow to Indian tribes dependent for survival upon hunting or upon plants growing wild. To make matters worse, they are killed off by epidemics of influenza or measles and the high mortality rate destroys their social structure and shatters their traditional system of maintaining order.

At the same time, the Indian finds that he has new needs—clothing, salt,

ditional values breeds demoralization and, above all, loss of self-respect.

The activities of the *Serviço* have posed many questions, some difficult to answer. These problems are still awaiting solution, a solution requiring the contribution of anthropologists interested in the future of so-called "primitive" peoples. General Rondon had foreseen these new problems and, in 1942, he created a research section attached to the *Serviço*.

Millions of men in the present-day world live under conditions little different from those faced by the Indians of Brazil. The example of Brazil is a lesson: it teaches us that their fate need not be tragic. But a profound understanding of their problem and of the situation which is confronting them with the advance of modern civilization is essential.

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