

A very good day to you....

The people of Rio Tiquié, Uaupés, Rio Papuri, Rio Içana, from the prelature of Rio Negro, whose bishop is Don Miguel Alagna, have suffered in general at the hands of white people – who were, I tell you, the invaders – since the first contact the Indians of Rio Negro had in 1750. With the arrival of the Salesian missionaries in 1915, there was a change in white slavery, because the new whites – the Salesians – catechized the Indian and imposed Catholicism, a religion that had been unknown in the region. In relation to these facts, as in the case of slavery, we can cite the name of Manduca, a member of the SPI [*Service for the Protection of the Indian, a federal government institution*] who lived on a farm on Rio Uaupés called Bela Vista, where he practiced the worst crimes against indigenous people.

Thanks to the work of the Salesians, the missions today have all the grammar school levels and schools have been initiated in Maturacá and Maraiuí. The students who finish school in the Salesian missions come to São Gabriel to continue on to secondary level grammar school. Many students who come to São Gabriel don't do so because they want to continue their studies but because they are obliged to by the Salesian mission. The coordinators of the schools, or the students that come to São Gabriel da Cachoeira, are those who demonstrate the best behavior during their school years, during the duration of their studies. Thus we see that the student doesn't decide on their own vocation, but that it is, rather, an obligation forced on them in accordance with the intentions of the Salesians.

Those students who are not able to come to São Gabriel da Cachoeira, or who go to other places in Brazil, are sent to Manaus or to other places to serve as domestic maids in family homes. Most of them are in the homes of military officers of the FAB [*the Brazilian Air Force*]. They are sold by the Salesian nuns in the prelature of the Rio Negro to benefit and please the military officers with the services that they offer. Many maintain good behavior, but others are engaged in or go to work in places of prostitution, at night, when they forget their families, their land, and do not want to return to their family. Many times, the nuns say that they are promoting human development. But for those of us who understand a little, this is not in any way human

development. I think this would shock the nuns, as they are very sensitive when one speaks truths. On returning to their homes, the students who finish upper grammar school in São Gabriel da Cachoeira are given a post teaching classes in the Salesian schools, from the first to the fourth grades. Others who have not been able to attain these job opportunities are forced to physically leave their lands and travel far away, thus leaving their families sad. Many never return. Today, jobs are not available to all. With the education that the Indians receive in the Salesian schools, there is little possibility that they will remain in their family's region. They leave, and definitively, for distant places. Today in Pari-Cachoeira can be found the Salesian brother Mr. Teotônio who works with boarding students, who are usually Indians and who are working in agriculture – ideal labor for the entire prelature of Rio Negro. This Salesian brother graduated from the University of São Paulo in Salesian agronomy studies, and the services he has provided in the places where he has been stationed have marked a very important phase in Salesian agronomy work.

Worse things happen to the other students. There are almost no Indians left in Barcelos. In Tapurucara, there are many river *caboclos* [*a term used to define descendants of Indians and whites, but also, as in this case, by the indigenous themselves fleeing racism*], because the word “Indian” is treated in a perjorative manner, according to the understanding of the Indians themselves. In any case, the majority of the people that live in the islands of the valley of Rio Negro do not stop being Indians. They came from the missions of the prelature of Rio Negro: Taracua, Içana, Pari-Cachoeira, Iauareté, and places that are located above São Gabriel da Cachoeira.

There is much opposition between our culture and the Catholic religion. On returning to São Gabriel da Cachoeira from Manaus, where I had participated in a meeting promoted by CIMI-North 1 [*the Indigenist Missionary Council*], I engaged in a conversation with Father Norberto, who is Austrian and had been the director of Pari-Cachoeira and who at the time was an itinerant priest for the Pari-Cachoeira parish. We had a conversation about indigenous issues. I thought that Father Norberto would be acting in accordance with the needs of the indigenous communities by virtue of the position he held. But my word was not in accordance with his, as his to me were not in accordance with mine. In

one of his phrases, he said: your parents and your ancestors were vagrants, they lived in a state of orgy, why return to this life again? This word “orgy” shocked me very much, and I brought this information back to our *maloca* [longhouse]. I spoke to my father about this. I also said to Father Norberto, wanting to defend my indigenous position, that the culture of a people should never be forgotten. The unity and integrity of a nation cannot happen if minorities are not treated justly. I also said that the program for national progress [*the National Integration Plan was created by the military government to geopolitically integrate the Amazon to Brazil*] and the education method developed by the Salesian missions are not proper for our region. These programs are prepared in other regions of Brazil and then adopted for use among indigenous tribes, thus killing our culture, killing our language. And we are victims of this predation. Evangelical preaching, along with the education program for national integration, was instrumental in finishing off indigenous populations, our culture and our mythology, and which we feel strongly about. In the municipality there is precarious medical assistance, so when Indians are sick the only option is to go to the Salesian missions to seek medication. There is FUNAI [*the Indigenous population was legally under the tutelage of the National Foundation of the Indian, a federal institution, but in this case the tutelage was virtually transferred to the religious institution of the Salesians whose headquarters are in Milan*], which pretends that it works for indigenous people. Our mythology, our traditions, and ceremonial festivals continue to be remembered and celebrated by many, but today there is a constant degradation of our policy of living and of being Indians. Each time we are more suffocated [*the Salesians prohibited indigenous rituals and ceremonies throughout the region thus forcing them to become clandestine*]. As soon as the missionaries arrived, they changed our structure. The former *tuxauas*, indigenous community leaders, were deprived of their traditional powers, as in the case of Pari-Cachoeira. It may also happen in other parts of the prelature of Rio Negro. I feel that it is happening in my region in Pari-Cachoeira. In Pari-Cachoeira, the Machado family should be the leaders in the region, yet instead it is Henrique Castro because he has the support of Bishop Miguel Alagna and of the missionaries of the Prelate of Rio Negro. Today he is considered the leader of the Indians, and he is the leader of UFAC [*Christian Encouraged*

Family Union, the first organization founded by indigenous people] and of the missionaries.

The soldiers of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB) act as though they do not know this fact: they know this and support this for the integration of national progress. [*FAB has also restricted the movements of indigenous peoples in the region.*]

Today, the majority of the Machado family, who should be taking care of their people, are instead in São Gabriel da Cachoeira, and some are in Manaus while other family members are still in situ but without any power. This Henrique, and several others who have the support of the Salesian priests, are the ears and eyes of the missionaries. That is, they inform them about what is happening inside and outside of the community, thus removing the sovereignty of these Indians and the true leaders of these ancient indigenous nations, and resulting in the loss of their culture and moral values. Many years ago, Henrique arrested an Indian and sent him as a prisoner on a plane to São Gabriel da Cachoeira. This man was from a family that had previously been the leaders in the Pari-Cachoeira region. His name is Benedito Fernandes Machado. This same Henrique is considered by the people in the region of the municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira to be a criminal. Years ago, when Henrique was traveling in a Salesian boat under the name of Domingos Savios, he committed the crime of killing his own brother, an Indian of the Taracúá parish. This deception means that those living in the prelature of Rio Negro, or the people responsible for the judicial laws of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, are unaware of this.

So, this is a promotion that the fathers support against indigenous sovereignty, and this is very heavy for those who understand and who see how it can prejudice indigenous persons and future generations. The person who was harmed by this crime was Francisco Lima, who today finds himself a military soldier in Rio Japura, while the criminal is received and promoted by the missionaries and the FAB. Other similar things also happen.

I have also seen that Salesian preaching and the manner in which religion is taught is being adopted as in previous eras, prohibiting our festivals, our ceremonial drinks, and

forbidding Indians to sell their craftwork in the Salesian missions. These practices were embraced at the time of Dom João Marquese and Father Pedro Domo, who broke our *caxiri* pots [*ceremonial drinking vessels*] and destroyed our ornaments, our ceremonies, and the power of the traditional tribes. It was at this time that it was finished.

The repercussions that exist within the prelature of Rio Negro are against these indigenist policies. I have noticed that something is wrong. They facilitate unification to integrate the Indian into national society, which cannot benefit indigenous peoples.

It is as if any of you, who have never felt yourselves to be Indians, were taken or grabbed and placed in an indigenous village. Yet this is what is done to the Indian, who in a very forced manner is made to integrate into the national community. Suffice it to say that this is a crime against humanity.

In the Salesian congregations there is violent exploitation of our craftwork. The *urutú* [*a small basket*], which in Pari-Cachoeira costs 40 *cruzeiros*, the correct price, costs 400 *cruzeiros* in Manaus. An *aturá* [*a larger basket*] that costs 100 *cruzeiros* will cost 1000 in Manaus. The witnesses to these practices are all the people of Manaus and the tourists that pass through the Museum of the Indian, the home of the exploitation of indigenous crafts.

There is no humility, therefore, and the vow of poverty and obedience that they made to the Catholic Church does not exist. There exists only frustration within the regulations of religious education. This happens in other places, and with this same sentiment.

The Salesian missions have received the praise only of important people whose aim is the national integration of the Indian. There is a phrase, which I will now cite, that shows this: "The influence of the Salesian missions of the Rio Negro is without a doubt of patriotic benefit. Barcelos, São Gabriel, Taracará, and Iauareté are cultural, moral, and civic centers. Agricultural schools, carpentry, tailoring, mechanic and cobbler workshops arm the students for the future struggle for life. This, however, the Salesians were able to achieve at the cost of much work and great dedication: that only Christian charity can inspire, encourage, and realize. Nothing better, nor more surprising in this Amazon forest. Today, we can already affirm that this population consists of vigilance

and work on this frontier. Tomorrow it will constitute, no doubt, an element of its own security due to the meritorious action of the Salesian missions." [*Frontier of Brazil: The Salesian Missions of the Amazon.*]

So these are praises that the missionaries receive, while the Indians on the other hand are marginalized from their own culture. What can be said, according to the conclusions that we are seeing here, is the sad fact of what is happening inside of Rio Negro, and that any of you here present would be against these teachings, against these religions that philosophically exterminate our culture, and our indigenous nations, not only in Rio Negro but in all of Brazil. Today there exists one of our respected things that we used during our traditional times and which we call Jurupari. Today it is found in the Free Tax Zone of Manaus, exhibited in the Museum of the Indian. Before, according to our traditions, it was forbidden for women to see the Jurupari. Yet today it is exhibited in the Museum of the Indian, to be seen by the curious, and thus is our religion dishonored. Our religion dies each day that a tourist enters the museum, or when a tourist takes a photo of our culture – this is at the extreme point of disrespect. Our things are considered sins of devaluation against national progress and against the programs of the government. The entry of multinational companies is facilitated, and national companies take the land of the Indians and finish off the small bit of our culture that still exists today.

It is worth pointing out that we are fighting for this, that from 1750 until today the indigenous population conserves what little of their culture that there is, their religion, the ceremonies, their language, although we are very much forced to learn the national language [*the Salesian missions prohibited, through the use of punishments, the speaking of the indigenous languages*].

This is what I wanted to tell you. This is what I was carrying as baggage, so that your consciences will hear us and you will bring to public opinion the knowledge that the indigenous people of Rio Negro, and of Brazil and of Latin America in general, are being violated in this manner, that we are being invaded by various teachings which act to convert us into Catholics in order to destroy our traditions, that all of this be known to

all of you here present at the Tribunal principally, and that you know that at least the Indian has the same sentiments and the same ideals as anyone else here...

It is worth noting that government companies or those affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior, such as FUNAI, are massacring indigenous people throughout Brazil, and we are being isolated by the ideological system, by the prelature of Rio Negro under the direction of the prelate Dom Miguel Alagna, and some of the priests who support the integration of the Indian into the national community. This is what I wanted to say.

Thank you.

(answering a question) ... It is good to take note of the fascist manner of the Salesian dictatorship of the prelature of Rio Negro and of the names of those who are the leaders and who are against the indigenist Brazilian policies promoted by CIMI [*the Indigenist Missionary Council that follows the teachings promoted by the Second Vatican Council of 1962 while the Salesians follow the conservative policies supported by the Council of Trent of the 16th century*]. Within the prelature of Rio Negro there exist Salesian brothers and Salesian priests who are against indigenist missionary policy. We will focus here on the principal figures: Mr. Guilherme Adamepe Iauareté, who exploits indigenous crafts that are then transported by the Brazilian Air Force, destined for Manaus where they are sold at so high a price you can only imagine. In Pari-Cachoeira, there is also Sister Alba, who is either Italian or Czech, acting in the same role. In Taracúá, there is a Sister Olga Tenório, with this same policy of extracting indigenous peoples from that area of Taracúá in the prelature of Rio Negro. There is also a Salesian priest called Father Alcionílo Alves Brezzi da Silva who is a writer, anthropologist, and theologian, and has been educated in universities in São Paulo and Rome. His writings discriminate against the Indian and yet he is praised by his own Salesian congregation. He attacks CIMI, saying that lay people, missionaries, and bishops who work with CNBB [*National Congress of Brazilian Bishops*] are subversives – that is, that they are communists speaking against the government. This was the task set before me: that I would testify frankly and in a clear voice to the strong pressure that is in the Rio Negro region.

(answering a question) ... I think that the visit of the Pope to the city of Manaus, in reference to the prelature of Rio Negro, has yielded no results until now because the

exploitation and the massacre of indigenous cultures continues up to this current moment. The group at Pari-Cahcoeira were put under obligation by the prelate Dom Miguel Alagna to do folkloric dances for the Pope. It is clear that Dom Miguel Alagna bought the indigenous people of Pari-Cachoeira so that they would present their folklore festival. This was disappointing to many indigenous people. In reference to the question concerning our principal beverage, which in the area of Rio Negro is *carpi* [a drink essential in certain ceremonies]. It was a ... how do you say that word... hallucinogenic beverage. Excuse me, I am not speaking in my language but in a borrowed one. This was the official drink of our people, for the elder men, according to our traditions. This was completely massacred by the Salesian priests. What is left today is *caxiri*. It continues to be violated.

I can say here that the visit of the Pope in relationship to the indigenous population who are under the tutelage of the prelature of Rio Negro, which is under the leadership of Dom Miguel Alagna, has not resulted in any changes which might benefit indigenous peoples. There has been no modification concerning indigenist policy, or the indigenist policies of indigenous delegations that work for self-determination of their lands. In Rio Negro self-determination does not exist. Indigenous people work for the demarcation of their lands, although the prelature illegally holds indigenous lands. That is what I wanted to say.

(answering a question) ... The Indians, until now, do not refuse to send their children to learn in schools, because they find it is important – that is, we also find it to be important. How could we solve this problem of the extermination of our own culture? It would be good if the Indians adopted their own teaching program structured within bicultural teaching. This would be a way that we could settle our accounts with the Salesian missions. But sadly, we do not have the people who are prepared and capable of doing this. It is for that same reason that we are obliged to learn in the national language, with education that is structured in other regions of Brazil and designed to integrate indigenous people. So there does not exist a policy that is directed by ourselves. We are tutored by CIMI and by our Black brothers that want to work with the objective of progressing the Indian in Brazilian society without losing indigenous

identity. In several points, it is noteworthy to add that the bicultural project creates enmity against the order of the education structure that is imposed by the priests and the federal government and the ministers, who are united in this sector of education for the Indian to be integrated into the national community.

Appeal to the Jury of the IV Russell Tribunal

1. A request for the launching of a campaign for the international non-governmental organizations who are financing the Salesian missions in the Rio Negro so that they are fully aware of the collusions that they are involved in.
2. Challenge the Brazilian government in its role as an accomplice in the crimes committed by the Salesian missions in Rio Negro.
3. To send the resolutions of the Tribunal, as well as the opinions of the jury members, to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) so that they are aware of what has been resolved.
4. That this be the beginning of an investigation of the collusion of all religious missions – Catholic or Protestant – that act on indigenous areas.

Rotterdam, 25 November 1980

Marcio Souza, Accuser

Álvaro Sampaio, Witness

Álvaro Fernandes Sampaio (Tukano), like all indigenous peoples in Brazil, was a ward of the state. When he traveled to Rotterdam, without the legal authorization of the government, he was then accused of being non-Indian and thus under the threat of punishment upon his return as well as of having his testimony made juridically void. The Salesian Mission boarding schools were closed after Álvaro Tukano's

testimony at the Russell Tribunal, and UFAC was terminated in 1984 due to differences that emerged as to the continued support of the Salesian missions.

(translated by Maria Thereza Alves 2020)