

Short Commentary

Open Access

An Alliance for Life

Angela Mendes* and Filha de Chico Mendes

Chairman of the Chico Mendes Committee, Acre. Brazil.

*Corresponding author

Angela Mendes, Chairman of the Chico Mendes Committee, Acre. Brazil. Tel: +55(68) 99995-2255; E-mail: angelamfmendes@gmail.com

Received: January 31, 2022; **Accepted:** February 07, 2022; **Published:** February 15, 2022

I begin this text with the sentence that my father left when he began to feel that his life was being threatened: “At first I thought I was fighting to save rubber trees, then I was fighting to save the Amazon Rainforest. Now, I realize that I’m fighting to save humanity. Chico Mendes, 1987”. The socio-environmental movement and its leaders are under threat today. The rubber tree is under threat. The Amazon is under threat. Humanity is under threat.

The Aliança dos Povos da Floresta was conceived in the 1980s by my father, Chico Mendes, and indigenous leaders at the time, including Ailton Krenak. The Alliance has become a revolutionary landmark for many reasons. The main one was to establish a relationship of trust between peoples who were always placed on opposite sides of a “war” that aimed only at expelling native peoples so that the rich owners of rubber plantations could further increase their productive area and profits. In this movement, fronts of resistance of the peoples (indigenous peoples, rubber tappers, coconut breakers, quilombolas, among others) were unified and expanded against the attacks suffered by land grabbers, loggers, landowners and other threats. Last but not least, in this articulation between extractivists and indigenous people, a political agenda for the right to territories was established. This is where the concept of Extractive Reserves was born, a concept presented at the I National Meeting of Rubber Tappers, held from October 10 to 17, 1985, in Brasília.

In my father’s intuition, Extractive Reserves would be spaces for maintaining the sustainable relationship between subjects and nature, valuing and emphasizing the traditional forms of forest peoples, but also of social, political and cultural construction, and this was his legacy for the world

Today, there is a global offensive by the extreme right, which has succeeded in electing fascist governments. This was seen with more emphasis in the USA in the election of Donald Trump in 2016 and here in Brazil, with the election of Bolsonaro in 2018.

What do the two have in common? the total aversion to the environmental agenda, to native peoples and to local traditional populations. In the case of Brazil, there is an aversion to all classes, with the exception of the white, privileged and wealthy class, which is a small minority of the population. Hunger and misery, large-scale deforestation in the Amazon, the government’s incentive to invade indigenous lands for mining, the passage of highways and the predatory exploitation of wood, projects to reduce and extinguish conservation areas and environmental

preservation, arson. Anyway, the Amazon bleeds in this fascist government!

After his election, with the support of politicians from the bullet bench (agribusiness defenders) and evangelicals who are in the National Congress, Bolsonaro began to put his project of necropolitics of death and destruction into practice. Attacks on the environmental agenda began with the appointment of military personnel to assume technical roles at the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) and Funai (Fundação of the Indian), drastically reducing budgetary resources in important areas such as inspection in UCs (Conservation Units). Also noteworthy is the appointment of a person with deep ties to agribusiness to the Environment portfolio; this among many other harmful actions to the environment and to the people of the forests.

After his election, with the support of politicians from the bullet bench (agribusiness defenders) and evangelicals who are in the National Congress, Bolsonaro began to put his project of necropolitics of death and destruction into practice. Attacks on the environmental agenda began with the appointment of military personnel to assume technical roles at the Ministry of the Environment (MMA), Chico Mendes Institute for Biodiversity Conservation (ICMBio), IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources) and Funai (Fundação of the Indian), drastically reducing budgetary resources in important areas such as inspection in UCs (Conservation Units). Also noteworthy is the appointment of a person with deep ties to agribusiness to the Environment portfolio; this among many other harmful actions to the environment and to the people of the forests.

In the year 2021, in particular, the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve and the Serra do Divisor National Park in Acre were targets of an action orchestrated by a dangerous consortium that involves politicians, businessmen, public agents linked to the illegal exploitation of wood and minerals, activities of livestock, land grabbing of public lands. All of this sets a precedent in terms of legal security for extractive reserves in Brazil. Along with the chaos, there is the sum of political and economic interests based on the predation of natural resources with a cunning strategy to destroy the protection of biodiversity in this region and expand agribusiness.

Authored by Federal Deputy Mara Rocha (PSDB/Acre), a communicator linked to Acre agribusiness, and Senator Márcio

Bittar (MDB/Acre), both members of the ruralist bench, the Bill (PL) No. dos Deputados aims to extinguish the Serra do Divisor National Park to create an Environmental Protection Area, in addition to reducing the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve (Resex) to serve the interests of invaders.

The aforementioned PL contains a series of irregularities and inconsistencies already described in a technical note by the MPF (Federal Public Ministry), in addition to disrespecting international agreements to which Brazil is a signatory, such as ILO Convention 169, which provides for free consultation, prior and informed to the communities of the units to be affected. The impacts on the territory are already being felt with the advance of fires, deforestation, increase in the bovine herd, logging and purchase and sale of land inside the Units. Suffice it to say that in 2020 the Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve was the champion of fire outbreaks throughout the Amazon region. According to data from Imazon (Instituto do Homem e Meio Ambiente da Amazônia) 13 square km of forest were destroyed and in October this year the Resex appeared with almost 10 square km of suppressed area. These attacks in the administrative, judicial and legislative spheres, targeting the memory and the field of ideas of Chico Mendes are orchestrated and seek to weaken the environmental, land and legal security of one of the first Extractive Reserves in Brazil, where the struggle of the forest peoples was born. . These predation systems show the power and audacity of this articulation and its *modus operandi*.

It is in this scenario of unprecedented setbacks and dismantling that the Amazon is losing large areas of forest cover due to uncontrolled deforestation and fires, unbalancing ecosystems and, above all, putting us today under an intense climate crisis.

All this serves a dystopian idea of progress and development at any cost. It so happens that this cost has been high for the most vulnerable layer of the population due to the absence of public policies that serve them with dignity. The current economic system has a voracious appetite and finds no obstacles capable of stopping its relentless pursuit of money and power. For these people, the Amazon is just a supplier of raw material (resources) and its people are obstacles that need to be removed from the path at any cost, be it taking away their territory, weakening their spirit, robbing their dignity or simply denying them a service. decent and humane, as it happens during the great pandemic of covid19 suffered by the world and by Brazil.

It is in this context, and considering the strategy of the executive power of Brazil to erase the origins of the ideas of territories of common use and collective possession, that we see PL 6024/2019 and all its symbolism of attacks on the Extractive Reserve that brings the name of Chico Mendes as an urgent need to build strategies to protect our leaders. It is necessary to reduce the consequences of these attacks on the resistance, in order to keep the forest standing, the Amazon alive and the protection of peoples, communities and any socio-environmental movement that faces this destruction.

The socio-environmental movement in Brazil expected a solution from COP 26, but this time expectations were not met. In fact, many pseudo-leaders went to Glasgow to talk about things they don't do, with empty speeches and pockets full of the daily fees paid by the public coffers, which come out of the pocket of Brazilian workers, with low wages and surrounded by high taxation. One suffers the consequences of their incapacities, for carrying lies, many lies! Hence, such a poor result, since those who can kick-start the great change we need, cannot or do not want to see that part of the solutions to face the chaos we are experiencing, and which can still get worse, were conceived and implemented. in the 1980s, when my father defended that the forest has "standing value" and that this population, with its traditional knowledge of natural resources, is an important part of this process of healing the planet, but that it needs to be protected and cared for and not handed over to exploitation of national and international capital in a cruel and savage way.

Finally, native peoples, as well as all segments of traditional populations, have resisted this state of affairs, but as the *ciranda*, authored by Master Joana do Maracatu sings, "companion help me, I can't walk alone/ without you I am fine, but with you I am better." Today, it is urgent and necessary to form a new Alliance, broader and more programmatic, which, in addition to these actors, also involves the whole of national and international society, academia, companies and financial institutions with socio-environmental responsibility and the progressive political class, which urgently need to understand that they must also assume this commitment to present and future generations; this is the Alliance of the Peoples of the Planet. In addition, we need the next leaders elected in 2022 to make a commitment to care for life and nature and act responsibly towards our greatest cultural, social and environmental heritage.