

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



WASHINGTON

July 24, 1941

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

Dear Mr. Pitrullo:

In reply to your telephone enquiry of July 23, 1941, permit me to report that the Library of Congress has not undertaken the compilation of a biographical dictionary of prominent Latin Americans.

It gives us great pleasure to enclose a sketch of the life of Mariano Candido da Silva Rondon.

Faithfully yours,

David C. Mearns  
Reference Librarian

Mr. Vincenzo Pitrullo  
National Academy of Sciences  
2101 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D. C.

# MEMORANDUM

FROM

TO THE CHIEF OF THE

M. Burgin

DIVISION

Hispanic

DIVISION

The following statement is quoted verbatim from "WHO'S WHO IN LATIN AMERICA", P. A. Martin, ed. (Stanford University Press. 1940), p. 453:

RONDON, Candido Mariano da Silva. Brazilian general and explorer. Born: Mimoso, suburb of Cuiabá, State of Mato Grosso, May 5, 1865. Educated: Liceu of Cuiabá, diploma of public teacher, 1881; Military School of Rio de Janeiro, 1883-1889, degree of bachelor of mathematics, physical and natural sciences, 1890. Public career: Joined the army in 1881; ~~xxx~~ amanuensis of the Quartermaster General, 1882; first lieutenant, 1890; attached to the commission charged with the reconnaissance of a telegraph line between Cuiabá and Araguaia, 1890; substitute professor of mathematics in the Military school (to 1892); chief of the telegraphic district of Mato Grosso, 1892; captain, 1892; in charge of highway construction work between Cuiabá and Araguaia, 1893-1894; reappointed chief of the telegraphic district in Mato Grosso, 1894; technical assistant of the Intendency General (Intendencia Geral) of War of Rio de Janeiro, 1898; in charge of construction of a telegraph line from Cuiabá to Corumba, Aquidauana, and Forte de Coimbra, 1900-1904; promoted to major, 1903; headed a scientific expedition to the southern part of Mato Grosso as far as the Paraguayan frontier (completed in 1906); headed a scientific expedition which left Mato Grosso in 1907 and reached the waters of the Madeira River in 1910; accompanied the late President Roosevelt on his expedition through the Brazilian hinterland, 1913. Since that time Sr. Rondon has been promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. In addition to the many scientific expeditions which have traversed vast regions of the Brazilian "Far West" and the Amazon basin, General Rondon's efforts have awakened Brazilians to the necessity of civilizing the aborigenes of the interior valleys, a work which the eminent General has himself undertaken with an extraordinary degree of success. At present General Rondon is attached to the Bureau of Boundaries of the Ministry of War. He was appointed in 1934 Brazilian representative on the

# MEMORANDUM

FROM

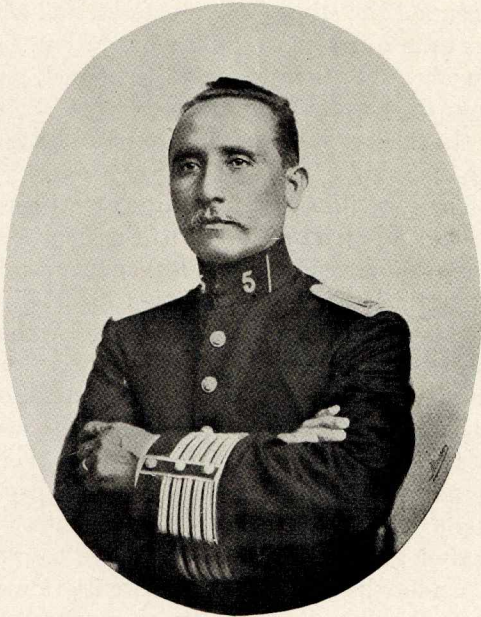
TO THE CHIEF OF THE

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commission entrusted with the execution of the Columbian-Peruvian treaty of 1934. He is a member of the Geographical Society of Rio de Janeiro and of many other learned bodies. Address: Inspeção de Fronteiras, Ministerio da Guerra, Rio de Janeiro.

spark which was to kindle the idea of independence into a blaze, and a conspiracy was prepared in Minas Geraes. Among the conspirators were poets, such men as Claudio Manuel da Costa, Alvarenga Coutinho, and Judge Thomaz A. Gonzaga; priests; and army officers of high rank, such as Col. Freire de Andrada. The soul of the movement, however, was a lieutenant of cavalry, Joaquim J. da Silva Xavier, nicknamed "Tiradentes," as he had previously been a dentist. He was a man of unblemished character, great energy, and a deeply religious mind, filled with enthusiasm by the idea of his country's independence. He went to Rio de Janeiro to secure recruits and arms. The conspirators met in Minas, and chose the motto for their revolution, "Libertas quæ sera tamen." According to their plan, the revolution was to break out in Villa Rica whenever the Governor ordered the collection of the tax on gold. One of the conspirators infamously informed the governor, Viscount Barbacena, of the whole plan, whereupon Barbacena ordered the derelict to be suspended, and this means prevented the conspirators from securing the support of the people. Word was sent to the viceroy, Luiz Vasconcelos, in Rio de Janeiro,



GENERAL CANDIDO MARIANNO DA SILVA  
RONDON.

Director of the Service of Protection of Indians.

he succeeded in discovering the hiding place of Tiradentes, who was arrested and placed in irons. Barbacena then ordered the arrest of all the conspirators and sent them to Rio de Janeiro. This was in 1789.

The trial lasted three long years. When sentence was read it was found that all the leaders had been condemned to death, their names were branded with infamy, and their property confiscated. Without waiting to hear the decision, Claudio M. da Costa committed suicide in prison. But a few hours after the sentence was pronounced the "Act of Queen Mary I" was promulgated, by which the penalties, except Tiradentes were commuted to transportation to Africa. Tiradentes was to be hanged. His posterity was declared forever infamous; his body was to be quartered and the pieces scattered

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The Hispanic Foundation is not undertaking a project involving compilation of biographical information about prominent Latin Americans.

The attached biographical sketch of Mariano Candido da Silva Rondon was obtained from Martin's WHO'S WHO IN LATIN AMERICA.

General Rondon's contributions have been varied. ~~xxxxxxx~~

He has supplied the leadership which has led to scientific research, to more humanitarian and enlightened policies towards the Indians, ~~xxxxxx~~ towards the opening up of the vast Brazilian hinterland.

Among his accomplishments can be listed the building of telegraph lines linking the hinterland with the Brazilian coast, the pacification and the training of the primitive peoples who in a few years were changed from naked savages to guardians and technicians of the telegraph.

To the Indianist General Rondon is the outstanding hero. At the end of the century Indians in Brazil were being hunted down and killed. They had no rights, no standing as human beings. Men, women and children were slaughtered by whomsoever came upon them. I myself talked with a cashiered army officer who was recounting his exploits before General Rondon interefered.

We came upon a village of these savages, he said. We

surrounded them and killed them all except some of the prettir girls.

"had they done you any harm" asked one of the listeners?

How could they, the ex colojel aswered. We were soldiers. But

it is best to exterminate such vermin. They are not himan beings.

They go naked like the wild beasts. Do they till the land ?

no. Then how can tyey they be human beings if they do not know

how to use the land ?"

Well, General Rondon thought differnetly. For him

nakedness did not spell differences of such a nature that the

they did not have any rights.

General Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon

"Sertanista" and Indianist  
by

Vincenzo Petruccio

Ten years ago I was ushered into a large, bare room, polished and cool, from which even the mild urbanity of Rio de Janeiro seemed to be shut off. From the far end a medium-sized, heavily tanned, lithe man came forward to greet me with the warm courtesy so typical of the Brazilians, in which a full appreciation and understanding of the dignity of man stands out from a background of Old World courtliness. As we talked I kept on ~~stuttering~~ marveling over this man, Brazil's great explorer and humanitarian, the General Rondon, whose modesty and freshness belied his great achievements and his age. It was months later, when I met him again in his native land of Matto Grosso, that I found the ~~right~~ metaphor which adequately described the General.

"He is as clean, as sturdy, as timeless," I thought, "as the iguassu palm forests of this land which has produced him."

"Candido Mariano" General Rondon is to the "sertanistas" of Matto Grosso and many are the stories spun about him in the long evenings around the small camp fires. The "sertanistas" are jealous of the privilege of claiming him for one of themselves. "Candido Mariano" is a general, but by sharing their hardships, by serving the "sertaõ" and its primitive folk, by practicing the highest kind of humanitarian morality, General Rondon has been adopted as their general, the fearless and the blameless.

The Sertanistas" claim General Rondon as their own, but a host of Indian tribes think that he is their "capitao", their Coronel", their General. They remember only too well what a change this man has brought in their lives. From being hunted down and slaughtered like the wild beasts, their villages destroyed, their women violated and then killed, they have been enjoying for many years the active protection of the government, they have been sharing

the fruits of Brazilian civilization without suffering violation to their own. Among them General Rondon has become a legendary protector and culture hero.

Under General Rondon's leadership Brazil has come to know its hinterland and its vast resources. Whether constructing telegraph lines, mapping new areas, or pacifying the Indian tribes the General and his assistants have been indefatigable in collecting and publishing vast quantities of data on every branch of natural history, geography and anthropology. His scientific contributions have been ~~many~~ many, his engineering feats no less, but as the practical exponent of Jose' Boniface's humanitarianism he has no peer in the history of Modern Brazil.

Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon was born near Cuyaba in 1865. Thus the "sertao" and the Indian problem were no strangers to him when after receiving a military education in Rio de Janeiro he returned to Matto Grosso as a young officer and assistant to Major Gomes Carneiro who was at the time engaged in surveying a telegraph line between Cuyaba and Sta. Rita de Araguaya. It was Major Carneiro, incidentally, who published an edict taking the Indians under his protection and whose energetic prosecution of anyone molesting the Indians gives him a place of honor among Brazil's humanitarians and Indianists. Several years later Captain Rondon was charged with the task of building the line and a road. He immediately assumed the task of pacifying the Bororos and the ~~Syng~~ Cayapos through whose territory the line was being run. He met with such success that the almost continuous warfare between these tribes and the settlers which had been going on from the earliest times stopped immediately. It became possible for Salesian missionaries to settle among the Indians to begin their meritorious work of teaching agriculture, and simple crafts designed to better the economic life of the primitive folk.

Later Captain Rondon was commissioned to extend the telegraph line to Fort Coimbra, an exceedingly difficult task to execute on account of the vast unknown swamps. But this was accomplished as his other assignments had been

with efficiency. His ~~great~~ insistence on pacifying the Indians with kindness and his practical demonstration of it in the case of the Bororos by this time had won over the Matto Grossenses, and ranchers who a few years before had looked upon the slaughter of Indians as sport now became his ardent disciples.

But the young humanitarian did not have an easy time of it in Rio de Janeiro where intellectuals vied with each other in preaching the gospel of extermination. Even the director of the Paulista Museum lent his ~~extra~~ weight to this faction. Rondon, however, was inspired by the truth that all peoples in all levels of civilization are fundamentally and organically alike, differing only in the degree to which they have developed culturally. For him the future of Brazil's hinterland lay not in exterminating its primitive population but in preserving it and in educating it so that it too could both share and contribute the fruits of civilization. He was impressed too by the gross injustice done to the aborigines. They certainly were not at fault for defending themselves and their land against the invaders, and therefore it was the duty of the civilized Brazilians to bring to the primitives the higher culture and not theirs the privilege to exterminate the weaker folk.

Rondon won. Protection of the Indian population became the official policy of the Brazilian government, and to-day I know of no country which gives such efficient protection to the Indians as does Brazil. Woe to him who does an injustice to an Indian, for not only the government has taken the Indian under its protection but the "sertanistas" also. General Rondon has not only inspired the government but the people at large as well with his own humanitarianism.

General Rondon's achievements are too many to recount in a short sketch. His march from Cuyaba to the Medira, an expedition that lasted three years and the construction of the telegraph line linking Matto Grosso with Amazonas and which in a few years was being taken care of and manned by the Paressi who originally had been as hostile as any of the other tribes stands out as his greatest. Most of that area which he traversed still remains largely

unknown . No one has been able to add much to the reports of the Commissao Rondon. In 1913 he and Theodore Roosevelt joined forces to explore the River of Doubt, now graciously named the River Roosevelt. Since then elevated to the rank of General he has been occupied with work in connection with Brazil's boundaries.

The "Inspeccao de Proteccao aos Indios" has carried on the work which General Rondon inspired . He, charged with the practical task of constructing telegraph lines and roads, ~~gaxspxk~~ set a practical example of peaceful intercourse with the primitive Indians. His influence cannot be estimated, but some inkling can be gotten by talking with the Inspeccao's personnel all of whom seem to take the Indian problem almost as a religion to be solved only in accordance with the principles set down by their leader General Rondon.

The list of tribes pacified wi too long to reproduce. They range over an area about the size of one half of the United States which is still essentially their land and recognized as such. Stations are maintained by the Inspeccao to which the tribesmen come, sometimes for knives, sometimes out of curiosity, but eventually they establish a firm relationship of friendship and they may even establish their village near the post. When that happens they are gradually taught to cultivate crops, tend cattle, keep chickens, construct better houses, to improve their techniques in every phase of their economic life. They soon become avid to learn to read and write and at each post a school is maintained. They are governed by their own headmen and their dealings with the outside world are looked after by the agents of the Inspeccao. No effort is made to destroy their culture. They are free to drop as much of their way of life as they no longer find useful and to acquire as much of the new as they wish. They can wander away from the village and live a nomadic existence as did their ancestors. In short they are merely offered the opportunity of learning to improve their economy. It is left to them to choose what is good and what is bad.

General Rondon's philosophy is one of humility before nature. He himself

is the living example of it. In answer to a panygeric he said,

"Compared to the life of our country and the life stream of humanity the life of the individual is but a feleeting moment which only in rare natures becomes perceptible. It will be too bad for him who for love of this moment dares to sacrifice any interest of those two lives, so impressive and so majestic."

Such words from General Rondon are not mere rhetoric. When in 1931 we met in Cormuba the General flew with us over the country which no man knows so well as he. We stopped at several fazendas On our way to Cuyaba. The General would disappear and we always found him sitting at the foot of some tree in quiet conversation with some poor sertanista, some old companion with whom he had shared labor and the comforts of frugal repast of whatever the expedition had been been to gather that day. He a general and the great hero of Brazil, the other an illiterate hunter or cowboy but, as the General always said, "so wise in the ways of the sertao."

General Rondon has not given up the fight for the Indian and for the highest ideals of mankind. The younger men, his disciples carry on in the sertao, but he still guides, he still prods the laggards, he still saves himself no trouble to speak for justice in human relations.

Once I asked Major Ramiro Noronha one of General(s Rondon's disciples why they sacrificed themselves for the sake of the primitive folk. They had done enough. Why did they not rest now? Major Noronha answered,

"Humanity has done much for the individual. The individual must now do something for humanity."

I felt that in the disciple I was hearing General Rondon, cool, fresh, and timeless as the iguassu forests of Matto Grosso.

Washington, D. C.  
August 16, 1941.

N. B. After August 28, adress will be changed to 1719 N. Sts, Washington, D.C.

August 16, 1941.

Dr. Carlos Giron Cerna  
Secr. Instituto Indigensta Interamericano  
Crozco Y Berra Num 1 -304  
Mexico D. F.

Dear Dr. Giron Cerna,

I am enclosing a biographical sketch of General Rondon.  
I hope that it meets with your needs.

not

My files are easily accessible at the moment, and I do not know if I have a photograph of General Rondon of the kind that he would like published. I wonder if it would not be best to have him send you one? Mention my name if you wish. I am wondering too if you would like to publish some pictures of the Indians of Matto Grosso.

With respect to the clippings they arrived to late to use, but why not append a note on the General's present activities? It would fit in very well as an editor's note.

With kindest regards and continued assurance of my fullest cooperation,

Fathfully yours,

Vincenzo Petruccio

# INSTITUTO INDIGENISTA INTERAMERICANO

ESTABLECIDO POR EL PRIMER CONGRESO INDIGENISTA INTERAMERICANO

OROZCO Y BERRA NUM. 1 - 304

MEXICO, D. F.

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MOISES SAENZ

CARLOS GIRON CERNA

No. 1366.

Mexico, August 11, 1941.

Dr. Vincenzo Petrullo.  
Science Service  
2101 Constitution Avenue.  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

My dear Dr. Petrullo:-

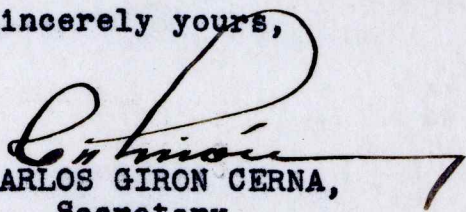
Thank you very much for your very kind letter of July 28. We look forward to receiving your biography of General Rendón before August 20, and hope that you will include also a photograph of him.

Enclosed is a speech given by General Rendón which you may be able to use in writing your biography; kindly return it to the Institute by regular mail at your earliest convenience.

I am sending to you under separate cover a copy of the first issue of the "Boletín Indigenista". We would appreciate having your collaboration on this publication also.

With best wishes, I am

Very sincerely yours,

  
CARLOS GIRON CERNA,  
Secretary.

ES/ar.

MEETING WITH GENERAL RONDON - JANUARY 25, 1942

After twelve years, minus two months, General Rondon and I resumed our personal contact. I found him in the offices of the Conselho Brasileiro Aos Indios, of which he is the President. I doubt if the council has much to do with the present time or has had much to do in the past. It struck me as a bit sad to have a man of General Rondon's ability, character and lively intelligence so far in the background in the present crisis.

Though a very small man, very indian in appearance, he is still full of energy in spite of his seventy odd years and apparently keeps up with war events. Fifty years of exploration have given him a wisdom and perspective far beyond that of many men; at least it may have given him a different orientation, which I can sense perhaps because of my own experience in the wilds and among peoples practicing cultures so distinctly different from our own.

He greeted me most cordially and in a moment we were again as easy and free with each other as we had been on the fazenda São João at the foot of Iguassú so typical of Matto Grosso twelve years ago. I expected almost at any moment to have a "turpial" alight on his shoulder or to have some "caboclo" appear and embrace the General in comradly fashion. So we were back in the "Xingu" and in the São Lourenço, but the war was a blanket over our conversations and we talked about the problem of gathering rubber in Brazil which he knows so well. He informed me that various areas had been set aside as Indian reservations and that

the present Government is reconstituting the Indian service. Apparently between 1930-1940 the service was practically abolished, but happily the outpost Simon Lopes on the Paranatinga escaped and my old friends the Bacairi, who cared for me on the Kulusen and Kuloene are still living there. This was good news.

The General has plans for the construction of a house to be called Casa de Indios in Rio de Janeiro, which will become the center of Indian administration as well as of scientific research, but the war has interfered with the carrying out of these plans.

He gave me some details about his life which only increased my admiration for his courage in being so outspoken in times like these. Apparently he was arrested in 1930 by the revolutionary elements and gradually released from the Indian service in 1934 and was sent to Leticia as chairman of the joint Peruvian-Columbian Boundry Commission. This was really just another way of keeping him under surveillance and in exile, for being Brazilian and the chairman of the Commission he could not leave Leticia and was forced to stay for four years when he was allowed to return to Rio de Janeiro and made President of the Conselho Brasileiro de Proteção Aos Indios.

He revived in me a question: Will the Indians ever be able to contribute anything to Modern civilization distinct from that already built up by European traditions? I got the impression that in General Rondon there is a partial answer. We can if we receive the additional help of Europe but at the same time will make the effort to understand their own traditions and their own people and perhaps will have the opportunity, as General Rondon has had, of actually experiencing both the European civilization and living in the florests where there exists nothing but that which is created in its most pristine form.



When General Rondon flew with us from Corumba' to Cuyaba' he saw for the first time Matto Grosso from the vantage point of height. Below stretched the vast pantanal over which he reamed for most of his sixty six years, mapping, constructing roads and telegraph lines, collecting flora and fauna, making geologic observations, pacifying Indians, and now at the age of sixty-six he could see the whole countryside stretched before him in one vast panaroma.

Only the hills of Dourados broke the <sup>apparent</sup> monotony of the plain , appearing so monotonous from the air but actually unbelievably rich in interest.

We were flying actually over Rondonia, the land of Rondon, for no man has left his stamp so well in Matto Grosso. Rondon will live for ever even though the roads and the telegraph lines may disappear, for he mzde possible the continued existence of primitive Indian tribes who would have undoubtedly been exterminated had he not taken them under his protection. As long as there survives indigenous blood in Matto Grosso so long will Rondon remain alive.

I feel the reprochful eyes of the General as I write these words for in my experience I have not met a man so modest as Mariano Candido da Silva Rondon. I recall his answer, almost a rebuke, to an orator who had praised his achievements before an appreciative audience.

"Compared to the life of ~~humanity~~ our country and of humanity," said General Rondon, " our life is but ~~an insignificant~~ fleeting moment which on ly when

which only when found in rare natures becomes perceptible. It will be too bad for him who for love of this moment dares to sacrifice any interest of those two lives, so impressive and so majestic."

We would say in American that the General does not take himself seriously. In fact his outstanding characteristic is his humility so common among men who have lived close to nature. There is no boasting on their part of having conquered nature. They do not look upon nature as something to be conquered but rather as something to be lived with. They feel themselves a part of it and therefore they cannot but be humble.

General Rondon is a child of Matto Grosso having been born ~~in 1865~~ near Mimosa a suburb of <sup>in 1865.</sup> Guyaba. Matto Grosso to-day consists of a vast hinterland some of it still unexplored, dotted with cities in the south. During the boyhood of Rondon it was of course almost a complete wilderness. Communication with the outside world was painful and rare. There were no roads and there was no telegraph. Travel was almost limited entirely to the rivers.

The forests <sup>desert</sup> and the swamps and most of ~~Matto Grosso~~ consisted of them were peopled by primitive folk who were in perpetual warfare with the outside world. <sup>Civilization in those days had but a feeble hold along the river banks.</sup> Indians in those days were considered no better than wild beasts and certainly less useful than negro slaves. True that the simple folk always felt bonds of sympathy between themselves and the Indians but

but there were no such bonds between the entrepreneurs and the Indians.

The boy grew in that kind of environment. His early education he received in the liceu of Cuyaba receiving his teacher's certificate at the age of sixteen. Later he went to Rio de Janeiro to study in the military school. It is said that while a student he already had formulated his ~~maxima~~ ambition to link his native land with the outside world and to bring about better relations between the Indians and the civilized Brazilians.

The Sertao, that fabulous region of Brazil claimed him upon his being graduated from the military school. He was sent to Matto Grosso attached to Major Gomes Carneiro who was engaged in surveying a line between Cuayaba and Sta. Rita de Araguaya.

~~The Sertao of Matto Grosso~~ To understand General Rondon one must understand the sertao of Matto Grosso. The sertao produced General Rondon and no living man has made the Sertao produce a practical way of life, so realistic and so humanitarian as did General Rondon. The Sertao is a symbol of wilderness where the strong learned to respect the weak, where the strong realized its kinship to the weak, and through the meaning of weak and strong disappeared. For the two became one in interests in common goals. The Indian was not to be exterminated after all. He was to contribute his bit to the development of humanity.