

A Great Leader Dies

(Chile) On July 31, Melillan Painamal died in Temuco of a heart attack. He was a Mapuche Indian leader, and founder of several organizations. He had been organizing the Mapuche people for over 30 years and was the foremost organizer in the Southern Cone during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1978, during the bloody Pinochet dictatorship, he founded the Centro Culturales Mapuches (CCM) with the goal of unifying the Mapuche people in their defense against the oppressive regime. This led to massive opposition of the Pinochet decree which divided Mapuche traditional lands. Until he died, he worked at the CCM. Melillan strived his entire life for continental Indian unity.

As Melillan Painamal returns to the Mother Magnu in the spirit of N'gnechen (the creator), his presence lives on in the struggles of Indian people throughout the world.



CALCHAQUÍ INDIANS UNITE AMIDST STRUGGLE AND CONFRONTATION

(Argentina) In the Calchaquí valley of the Province of Tucumán there are approximately 25 Indian communities, all of whom have a long history of struggle. The Diaguita-Calchaquí people waged an implacable war of resistance against the Spanish invaders. In 1716, in order to end the hostilities, the kings of the Spanish Crown signed a treaty with the Indian chiefs, who were led by the Cacique Chapurfe. By means of this *Cedula Real* (a treaty signed by the King of Spain), titles were granted and Calchaquí sovereignty over their land was recognized.

Today, however, the Argentine government does not recognize this treaty. Calchaquí lands are being usurped by landowners who obtain new deeds issued by accomplices in the government. The landowners charge rent from the villagers and if they cannot pay, their animals or harvests are taken away and they are thrown off their lands.

The present environment is one of confrontation and struggle. In July of this year, representatives from the communities of Amaicha, Quilmes, El Paso, Los Chañares, El Carmen, El Bañado, Anchillo, Anjuana, Talapazo y Colalao met together to develop a joint work project. They issued the following declaration:

Taking into account the proximity of the 500th anniversary of the Spanish conquest and the historical situation of the indigenous communities of the Calchaquí valley where we find ourselves continuing to resist the loss of our lands and our culture, we have decided to work together to recover and strengthen our organizations.

*We are conscious of the fact that it is only through organizing all of our communities that we will achieve the strength needed to demand respect for our rights to the land, for our cultural *pautas* (values), our traditions and our methods of work and organization.*

The struggle to regain our lands began with the conquest, and was achieved in 1716 by our ancestors. From then until now, the struggle has not ceased. After the independence of Argentina from Spain, the land was lost to usurpers who took advantage of it for personal gain. Again we had to defend our rights, and this time we achieved the recognition of national authorities (the protocols of 1857 and 1896). It is based on this latter recognition that we defend our territories today.

In spite of all of this we maintain our culture, our work on the land, our veneration for Pachamama (Mother Earth), our own music, our own methods of artesanry, and a spirit of community which is reflected in our patterns of land tenancy and organization.

Faced with these needs, and given that the heirs of the conquistadores of five centuries ago are organizing a festive commemoration of what have been five hundred years of subjugation, exploitation, and even genocide, those of us who have endorsed this project have resolved to join our voice with that of all of the peoples of America who continue to resist and demand justice and respect for our fundamental rights.

