

COLOMBIA

CRIC Issues Statement On M-19 Guerrillas

The Cauca Regional Indian Council (CRIC) has published the following statement on the military strife in southwestern Colombia in the latest issue of Unidad Indígena (Apartado Aereo 32395, Bogota, Colombia).

We reject the declaration of the M-19 guerrilla movement which was announced by radio September 6, 1986. The declaration, which was made after the group had militarily taken the community of Inza, stated that Indian people are in total agreement with the war that M-19 has declared against the government.

Indian organizations know that the interests of Indian people and our struggle are not compatible with the war now carried on by armed groups. We reject the war in Indian communities and territories that these guerrilla groups want to impose on us by force in clear violation of the rights of autonomy of Indian communities.

The M-19 movement falsely maintains that it represents Indian interests based on the fact that some Indians are active in this group. However, those Indians act as individuals and not as members of Indian communities.

Finally, we object to M-19's use of the names of Indian leaders to suit interests not compatible with those of Indian communities.

Popayan, September 8, 1986

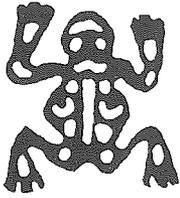
Paez Leader Tells Pope Indian View Of History

The following comments were made by Paez Indian Guillermo Tenorio to Pope John Paul II before a gathering of about 150,000 people in Popayan during the Pope's visit to Colombia the first week of July.

Soon we will mark the 500th anniversary of the arrival of European conquerors in our land. Much has happened since then to shape the destiny of our people. We have experienced a complete upheaval of our culture. We complete 500 years of history made in the silence of pain, contempt, marginalization, of tortures which remain unknown because they are tortures of Indian people. Our history has been a struggle of life or death for our cultures. Many brothers and sisters have succumbed to the unceasing aggression of the conquerors, but many others have persevered in our struggle. The wild mountains of the magnificent Andes, the plains, and the thick Amazon jungles are deaf witnesses to all our sufferings and hopes. Our music, the sound and the image of Indian people, bears witness to the sadness caused by the pillage of our land, the undermining of our community organizations, and the undervaluing of our



Guillermo Tenorio's speech to the Pope was interrupted by a Colombian Church official, inspiring the above cartoon in CRIC's newspaper.



languages, our medicine, and our systems of community education.

But in recent years, along with a general awakening of human consciousness, we as people and as Indians have awakened. In this awakening we look with honor and love to the heritage of our past, and in this spirit we have begun to organize ourselves to be stronger. With steady efforts and much work we are recovering our land, to live there with our own forms of government, to proudly speak our own languages, to seek an educational system which facilitates our cultural and social development.

The road we have taken is difficult because the landowners have not hesitated to kill Indians, including women and children, to imprison us, and to militarize our territories. And it is important to acknowledge that a sector of the Church has also worked against us. Because we have struggled for our liberation they have slandered us by calling us subversives and suspended health and educational services. Despite this we maintain our faith in Christ and take refuge in the words you spoke in Mexico, when you said that the Church must be rooted in the people and committed to an identity in the culture of our communities.

There also has been a sector of the Church which has seen in the struggles of Indian people the sufferings of Christ for true liberation and for the right to life that motivates our struggle. Such representatives of Christ on earth who have been with us in our struggle are also persecuted and killed, as in the case of the deaths of Father Pedro León Rodríguez and Alvaro Ulcué Chocué, the only Paez Indian priest.

With this greeting to Your Holiness, we remember in our history the shedding of Indian blood, blood of native Americans, blood which nourishes the new world which we seek. . . . We are convinced that such martyrdom will bear abundant fruit.

(See Page 8 for the comments of a Bolivian Indian leader on liberation theology.)

Amazon Communities To Stage Indian Olympics

The following story appeared in a recent edition of Unidad Indígena, the publication of the National Organization of Indians of Colombia (ONIC).

Centuries ago the Witoto and Muinane people held sports tournaments where they played games called "tops," "ball," "spear," and "athletics." The games were mostly forgotten until about ten years ago when sports lovers began holding tournaments of European games. That reminded people of the traditional Indian games, and some priests organized a tournament called the Regional Indian Olympics of the Amazon. The first competition was held in 1974 at Chorrera, Amazonas, and since then the games have been expanded to include many Indian groups.

Poster at left announces a palin tournament sponsored by the Mapuche organization AD-Mapu in Chile last summer. Palin is an Indian game similar to hockey which is played with bent sticks and a wool ball covered with leather.

