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Indigenous Women Organizing

Plus: Report on
Brazil and the Attack
on Indian Lands



LINKING INDIAN PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS



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In light of the recent Fourth Women's World Conference in Beijing, and the international attention that is being focused on women's issues, we dedicate this issue to Indigenous women. In the context of the Beijing conference and the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples celebrated by the United Nations, Indigenous women raise their voices from all nations, peoples, organizations, and communities and call for the respect of Mother Earth, life, territory, self-determination, and communal intellectual rights. Through this calling, Indigenous women also seek to gather forces for a better conservation of Indigenous philosophy; the ethical, esthetic, and spiritual values contained in the vision of our ancestors. Women, along with giving birth to the new generations, are the guardians and those responsible for transmitting, developing, and protecting the values which identify us as peoples. This is why women have played such an important role in historical struggles for life, although that role is almost never acknowledged.

In the Beijing conference, despite the limited access for our voices, we Indigenous women made a declaration to the international community in which we expressed our opposition to all forms of social injustice, and all types of violence and discrimination which affect our communities. We denounced the re-colonization and the threat to the ecological equilibrium in our communities, which under the name of globalization, creates conditions for wealthy nations to once again invade our territories to exploit the resources that, thus far, we have managed to preserve. We spoke out against accords and entities such as GATT and the World Trade Organization (WTO), which help create the instruments for the appropriation and privatization of our communal intellectual property. We denounced the "pirating" of ancestral resources by transnational companies in this age of "neoliberalism." Under such models, our values and communal exchange practices will become a thing of the past, substituted with the greed required by the rules of the free Market. We are even witnessing the appropriation of our genetic inheritance, under the name of the Human Genome Diversity Project. In the mean time, our rivers, the air we breathe, and the land we live on are continuously fouled, leading to the slow death of our Mother Earth.

In the effort to sustain our families, we have had to incorporate non-Indigenous ways, but we strive to remain in harmony with the environment. We choose consciously to stimulate those economic activities that strengthen our peoples, understanding that our communities depend mainly on traditional systems of production like fishing, hunting, family agriculture, and small crafts enterprises.

The movement of Indigenous women today confronts all sorts of serious threats as it places itself in the path of powerful and destructive forces. It is urgent, considering the current situation, to develop better methods of communication between Indigenous women so as to coordinate effective actions in the defense of our peoples. Along with this, our double, vital role as reproducers and preservers of our people must be strengthened. Faced with this historical, transcendental mission, we should seek inspiration and wisdom in our ancestors for our journey to the next millennium. We should look for strength, courage, and determination in the future, which is the future of our communities, organizations, and our peoples, and their right to exist in dignity.

In this issue, in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous women have contributed articles, we explore the ways that Indigenous women have participated in the broader Indian movements in Latin America, the specific organizations and programs that have focused on women's needs and activities, and, by means of interviews, the point of view of native women themselves; how they envision their role in native and national society, and the hardships they must endure when they try and change those roles.

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Peru: Ecological Protection Zone Plan Threatens Indigenous Lands

INRENA, the Peruvian National Institute of Natural Resources, in concordance with article 12 of the Ley de Tierras (Land Law), has put forth a proposal to create Ecological Protection Zones out of 40.5% of Peru's Amazon lands. Within these zones, concessions could still be granted. The rest would eventually become private property. This would be disastrous for Indigenous communities, most of which do not have legal title to their land.

The proposal, published in the Peruvian newspaper *El Peruano*, defines Protected Zones as natural areas already protected (national parks and reserves), swamps, fragile watersheds, and lands along rivers. More than 31 million hectares of the Peruvian Amazon would fall into this category. The rest, about 46 million hectares, would be classified as Areas Free of Ecological Protection and be administered by the Ley de Tierras, making it eligible for sale by public auction to private investors.

Indigenous groups have already reacted strongly against this project. The Aguaruna and Huambisa council forwarded its own amendments to the Ley de Tierras to the Ministry of Agriculture. Now, it only remains to see how the Minister of Agriculture, who stated that he was open to receiving the input of all sectors, will react to the national and international pressure.

Information received from El Comercio, Lima, and the Amazon Coalition

Women March in Chiapas to Commemorate International Women's Day

On international woman's day, March 8, 1996, between five and seven thousand people, mostly Indigenous women, gathered at the Plaza de San Diego and marched to the plaza of the main cathedral in the center of San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. This march, which coincides with the dialogue at San Andrés Larráinzar between the Mexican Government and the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), was held to commemorate International Women's Day and was organized by the Comisión de Mujeres Por El 8 de Marzo (The Commission of Women for March 8th) and the Frente Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Front, or FZLN).

The participants came in caravans from Indigenous communities all over Chiapas, including the Lacandón jungle. It was an emotional and inspirational event as women,

some carrying babies on their backs, and many wearing ski masks, marched through the streets. Some banners denounced the unfair treatment of Indigenous women and demanded equal rights for women, and others announced support for the FZLN and the EZLN.

Compiled from reports from Global Exchange Volunteers

Honduras: Violence Flares Against Indigenous Communities

The Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America (CODEHUCA), has expressed grave concern over the safety and life of Chortís Indigenous members and leaders, a community residing in the departments of Copán and Ocotepeque.

Representatives of the Confederation of Autochthonous Peoples of Honduras have reported a series of death threats made against the leaders of the Indigenous Chortís Council of Honduras (CONICHH) and members of their families. Particular mention was made of the following persons: Antonio Arias, María de Jesús Interiano, José Ernesto Suchite, José Domingo Mejía, Victoriano Pérez, Natividad Lopez, Juan Amador Méndez, Andrés Ramírez, Estanislao Ramírez and Cristóbal Pinía.

Members of the community have been subjected individually and collectively to several attacks including the destruction and burning of their houses, fields and other possessions. These acts have been attributed to cattle breeders and land owners in the region who are opposed to the reclaiming of land which the Indigenous population has occupied for over a century.

Within this context, on March 2 and 4, 1996, the houses and other possessions of seven Indigenous families were burnt and destroyed. One of the fires also caused the death of the child Ismael Arias Leon.

CODEHUCA remarks that in 1994 the Government of Honduras ratified ILO (International Labor Organization) Convention 169 and in July of the same year also signed a commitment, stipulated with 8 Indigenous and Black communities, in order to resolve conflicts over land possession. In spite of this, so far there has been no definitive distribution of land to the Chortís communities of Copán and Ocotepeque.

The International Secretariat of OMCT/SOS-Torture believes that the failure to comply with the obligations mentioned have encouraged the commission of acts constituting grave violations of the right to life and safety of people, as well as their economic and social rights.

Information from OMCT/SOS-Torture

Please send letters to the Honduran government expressing your concern: S.E. Carlos Roberto Reina, Presidente de la República, Casa Presidencial, 6a Avenida, 1a Calle, Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Fax : (504) 34 35 73 Telex : 1129 MMRR HO/1429 HO

Guatemala: Government Approves, but Modifies, Convention 169

On March 5, 1996, the Guatemalan Congress unanimously approved Convention 169 on "Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal Populations in Independent Countries" of the International Labor Organization (ILO), revised from an earlier version in 1989. Ratification, however, occurred only after the ruling party modified the first article of the Convention. The night before the congressional session, hundreds of Mayan people had gathered in front of the Legislative Palace in a vigil for the "new dawning."

Convention 169 was first brought to the Guatemalan Congress in 1992. It wasn't until 1995 that, under the Presidency of General Efraín Ríos Montt, it was once again up for ratification. At that point it was taken to the Corte de Constitucionalidad (Court of Constitutionality) to determine if it contradicted the national constitution of Guatemala. Its constitutionality assured, Kaqchikel-Maya deputy Aura Marina Ozooy of the Guatemalan Republican Front proposed to re-open the dialogue in February of this year.

The debates for and against the Convention were intense. Siglo XXI and Prensa Libre, both major Guatemalan national news publications, came out with headlines such as "Convention 169 to the Trash Bin!" and "Ratification of Convention 169 Creates Environment of Uncertainty." The reaction of the private sector was one of cautious apprehension. "[169] might be harmless to the country, nevertheless in no way does it benefit the interests of Indigenous people," says the president of the Agriculture Department and the Committee of Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations. "...it will only bring chaos to the country."

Indigenous organizations, on the other hand, did their best to ensure that this favorable piece of legislation get approved by the national government. COPMAGUA (Coordinator of Mayan Organizations of Guatemala) stated that "with the ratification of Convention 169, the Mayan people seek to build a solid and lasting peace in the country... We are calling out to you so that you may realize the necessity of change in this society, that it's no longer possible to go on accepting living conditions implanted during

500 years of sacrifice, pain, despair, indignation, and alienation."

Seventy-five deputies were initially present at the voting session. Seventy-two remained at the moment of decision, and voted unanimously for Convention 169. Nevertheless, the governing party (PAN - Party of National Advancement) managed to modify Article 1 of the document, ensuring that the ratification is being made with the understanding that the dispositions of the national constitution come before those of the Convention.

Information provided by Atencio Lopez

BRAZIL: Marcio Santilli Resigns from the Presidency of FUNAI

On March 8, 1996, Marcio Santilli, resigned from the presidency of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) after 5 months of service. This comes as the agency's fundamental aim of demarcating Indian lands has been undermined by the recent passing of Decree 1775 which allows outsiders to contest the process in a court of law.

After 10 years of documented FUNAI corruption, Santilli was in the midst of attempting a clean up the organization. Many high level decision-making FUNAI authorities have been accused of illegal logging and mining in Indigenous areas as well as having long-standing patronage ties with some local leaders. Where Santilli had identified blatant cases of corruption, he had replaced staff, combating powerful job security laws for the public sector. After the passing of Decree 1775, however, FUNAI's effectiveness seems to have completely plummeted. Faced with corruption scandals, an outbreak of invasions of Indigenous areas, and police inaction, Santilli resigned.

"We owe Marcio Santilli our thanks for his effort to clean up FUNAI, and put it in shape to effectively defend Indian rights in Brazil. But it is now clear that the National Indian Foundation needs radical surgery, not band-aids, if the defense of Indigenous rights in this government is to move from rhetoric to reality," said Carlos Alberto Ricardo, executive secretary of the *Instituto Socioambiental*.

On March 14, 1996, Julio Gaiger, a lawyer specializing in environmental, agrarian, and Indigenous rights, took office as the third president of FUNAI during Henrique Cardoso's term. Last year Gaiger worked as an auxiliary to the Justice Minister and is responsible for the final text of Decree 1775.

Information from Environmental Defense Fund and Amanaka'a, and the Instituto Socioambiental

Two Watershed Encounters for Indigenous Women in Mexico

The National ANIPA Women's Conference and National Indigenous Forum recently held in Mexico constitute two examples of how Indigenous women's participation is increasingly crucial for a global Indian identity.

By Maya Santamaria

The high level of participation of Indigenous women in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) has inspired and encouraged other Indigenous women to take part in the civilian struggle in Mexico. Recognizing their importance as the base of their culture and the givers of life, a fundamental role which is given little value in society, Indigenous women from many different regions of Mexico have decided to raise their voices after 503 years of silence in order to rescue their dignity and defend the rights of Indian peoples.

The need to analyze and understand the particular situation of Indigenous women has caused them to make spaces for themselves where they can discuss their problems, needs, and interests. During the closing of the last year and the opening of the new, two encounters of Indigenous women were held in the highlands of Chiapas: the working table on "Situation, Rights and Culture of Indigenous Women" in the dialogues between the EZLN and the Government, the National ANIPA Women's Conference.

Women and the Peace Dialogues

With the will to dialogue with the government about their demands as

Maya Santamaria writes and researches primarily in the region of Chiapas and has followed the Zapatista uprising since it began in 1994. She also provides technical assistance for the women's Tzotzil Weaving Cooperative in San Cristóbal de las Casas. She is presently working on an exhibit on Zapatista women in Minnesota

Indian women, 19 invited guests and twelve advisors from Indian communities and women's organizations throughout Mexico participated in the Working Table #1 of the Peace Dialogues, "Indigenous Rights and Culture," between the EZLN and the Government in San Andrés Sacam Ch'en, Chiapas.

The women who participated as representatives of their communities and organizations in the dialogues, among them Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Chinanteca, Chol, Mixteca, and Nahuatl women, prepared their list of demands despite language and cultural barriers. Through the two phases of their work, from October 18th to the 30th of November, they drafted an elaborate document which signaled the triple discrimination that they suffer as Indigenous people, as women, and as the poor when it comes to health, education, nutrition, housing, and recreation.

The EZLN's female delegation demanded, among other things, that Convention 169 of the International Workers Organization (OIT), and other international pacts signed by Mexico, be made legally effective, and that they be translated to all of the Indian languages for distribution to the communities. Convention 169 of the OIT is one of the principal legal tools that Indian peoples have to defend their rights to self-determination, and the basis of the claim to Autonomy of Indian peoples. They demanded that based on these accords, the necessary reforms be made to the Federal Constitution, so that it include the free exercise of the autonomy of Indian peoples. "We women manifest

that the autonomy of the *pueblos indios* is the path towards the initiation of a new relationship amongst ourselves, with the Mexican state, with other Mexicans, and between men and women... Within this framework of autonomy, we Indigenous women demand our full participation, and that no internal or external condition impede it."

The document also demands a renegotiation of NAFTA and the reform of article 27 to its original revolutionary spirit, which stated that the territories of Indian peoples are "inalienable, not negotiable, and indispensable," and which was altered against the will of most Mexicans for the purpose of passing NAFTA. Among their demands was also the right of women to own and inherit land, the redistribution of land based on the criteria of sustainability, access to alternative technology, increased and improved educational, cultural, health, production, labor, and social welfare services, as well as the end of the PRI-dominated (Institutional Revolutionary Party) State, and the transition towards a true democracy.

The process of actually putting together their ancestral demands in a joint document representing Indigenous women in Mexico proved an invaluable experience. Among other things, it provided a venue for the new relationships and organization between Indian leaders through the leadership of the EZLN. The government commission (COCOPA), in contrast, did not ratify the women's document and did not present the least intention of negotiating a fundamental change. It stated that it would not consider the discussion of concepts such as "autonomy," "religion,"

"self-determination," or "new constitution."

National ANIPA Women's Conference

The first women's encounter of the National Plural Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy (ANIPA) was held in San Cristóbal de las Casas from December 7-8, 1995. Two hundred and sixty representatives of 65 Indian and women's organizations from 30 Indian nations and 13 states of the Mexican republic gathered in Chiapas to "speak our word, talk about our rights, uses and customs, and discuss the proposal of autonomy for our communities, within a vision of gender."

The national Women's Conference came at the culmination of a series of women's workshops and regional conferences galvanized by the Zapatista uprising that have sought to provide spaces of reflection and discussion about the issues confronting Indian women. In addition, many women feel the urgency to further organize and cry out against the military presence in their communities—not just in Chiapas, but across Indigenous regions in Mexico—and what this presence means for their families and their communities.

Invited by the Organizing Commission of the ANIPA and the women's organizations in Chiapas such as K'inál Ansetik, J'pas Joloviletik, and the women's commission of CONPAZ, the participants of the encounter discussed the legal initiative that is in progress for the creation of Autonomous Pluri-ethnic Regions (RAP). Many of the women involved in the autonomy initiative have expressed that the proposal does not include the autonomy of women within their society, nor their desire to have specific rights as women, and that they have not been taken into consideration during the creation of the proposal.

In the two days of discussion the women took the time to talk about the political and social situation in their villages, communities, and homes. They



Photo: María Sarameña

Women of San Andrés Sacamch'en de los Pobres before the first dialogues.

analyzed their lives as children, as mothers, and as wives. They gave a new name to their struggle, that of "autonomy," and made the concept theirs, one that they could now take back to their communities and share with other women.

In attempts to do away with the societal factors that oppress them as Indigenous women, the participants discussed their rights, which they translated into Spanish as "customs." They expressed their desire to do away with all the "bad customs" and nourish the "good customs" in their society. "There are customs that can be counterproductive or contrary to the dignity or liberty of women," said Juliana Gómez, Mixteca and representative of the Editorial Center of Indigenous Literature in Oaxaca. Juliana considered it important to recognize that "sometimes, we women are the ones transmitting bad customs with the education we give our children," and that "the change should begin with the education of women."

The amendments proposed by the women for the initiative to form autonomous regions were drafted into a document and presented to the general council of the Autonomous Pluri-ethnic regions during the forth reunion of the ANIPA, which took place on the same grounds for the three days immediately

following the women's ANIPA conference. Many of the women delegates stayed for the general assembly, making this the highest attendance of women at an ANIPA meeting. During the ANIPA meeting, they asserted that, "Autonomy is a set of attitudes and forms of resistance for the preservation of our customs, languages, and traditions, and to reject the resources the government gives us, because many times they divide us."

The women at the conference also reviewed a document written by the EZLN's advisors and guests in San Andrés, which was approved by the ANIPA. The initiative for Autonomy and the women's proposal were then to be presented at the National Indigenous Forum which had been convoked by the EZLN.

The proposals and demands made by the women who worked and participated in these encounters will ultimately be sent to the Congress and Senate for legislation on Women's Rights. It is important to recognize that these spaces where women have, as an option to war and for the construction of peace, debated their problems concerning their culture and rights signal an important change in the political process in Mexico; namely, that the process of democratization can no longer occur without their true liberation as women. ♡

Profile of an Indigenous Woman Organizer

Interview with **María de Jesús Hernández Valderas**

It is important to let Indigenous women speak for themselves, whether in a political context in their respective cultures and communities, or in the pages of the journals and magazines that speak of them. In what follows next, María de Jesús Hernández Valderas, a Nahuatl woman in Mexico, provides us with a glimpse of the activist world of Indigenous women. Surmounting the difficulties historically placed on her, María embodies the enduring spirit of Indigenous women across the continent.

Can you tell us your name and where you are from?

My name is María de Jesús Hernández Valderas. I participate in a women's organization called Campesina Women's Union of Jelica, in San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

Are you Nahuatl?

Yes, we speak Nahuatl.

In how many communities do you work?

We work in nine communities in the municipality of Jelica.

When and how was the women's organization born?

The women's organization was born when our *compañeros*, who have an organization called la Igualdad de Jelica (Equality of Jelica), were able to see that they weren't able to progress, that their organization would not work without the support of women. Because of this, they named us the "right arm of the Cooperativa de la Igualdad de Jelica (Equality of Jelica Cooperative)." From that point on, they saw that it was important that women participate, and

we called for the first meeting. Various women from several communities attended. The important thing was that we were very motivated about participating in a meeting. Before this, we had never attended a meeting. It was the first time that we women left the house, all full of emotion, and carrying our children.

Were the husbands bothered that the women were holding meetings?

Well, at first the women's meetings were held with *compañeras* who already were participating. That was how the organization began. Later, invitations were made to the other women who also wanted to participate.

What are you able to achieve through the women's organizations?

We want women to be recognized; that we also participate and that we be heard. Many times when women speak in a meeting, the men don't pay attention. We want to gain support for us, the women, together, organized.

What are some of the activities usually done by women in your community?

The chores of the woman. . . The home has always been left to us; that is, to take care of the home, to gather firewood, water, and care for the children also. I am finding out that this happens everywhere.

Do you also work in the fields?

Yes, some of the women work in the fields, and many of us dedicate ourselves only to the family.

What do you grow in the fields?

In the fields we produce mostly Coffee, and some vegetables.

Is there much that you don't produce because the land is not good?

The land is good but we have noticed that it is much better for coffee. Very little of corn and beans is cultivated.

Have you all been in contact with the women of other communities?

Yes. Yes. We are participating in a coordinating group. We are participating jointly, men and women. There, at the regional level, we talk about women's situation and special needs.



What is the coordinating group's name?

It is called COCIP (Laguasteca Potosina Indigenous Organization Coordinating Body).

Are all of you Nahuatl in the coordinating group?

No, we are Nahuatl and Mames also.

Are you working closely with women in Chiapas?

Up until now we haven't had much contact, no.

But do you think it's important to be in touch with them?

Yes, we would like to be communicating. We don't hear much about the work that they're doing. We would like to be informed so our organization here can take on some of the responsibility and show that we can help them from here.

Why contact women of other countries?

It is important because that way we find out how women live at the national and international level as well.

Do you have children yourself at home?

Yes, I have four children.

And you have time to work in the women's organization?

Well, I don't have a lot of time, but I make some. My children still depend a lot on me, as well as my husband. They are all still little!

What is your position in the organization?

The women selected me as the Women's Union Treasurer.

So you handle a lot of money?

Well not so much but. . .!

What are some projects you have been involved with?

First we managed to get a popular soup kitchen there in the municipality of Jilitra that is called "Flor del Café," a small goods store that is in one of the communities, and a *nixtamal* (corn for tortillas) mill.

Is coffee produced in the mountains or in the plains?

In the mountains.

We are also participating in alternative medicine and in various bakeries.

Do you still use your traditional medicine?

Well, in large part that was being left aside, but we want to pick up traditional medicine again.

Do you also retain your religious practices?

People are still very Catholic in large part, but we also have other sects in which people participate, but they are much less practiced than the Catholic group.

So you don't retain any of the Nahuatl ceremonies, like offerings to the Earth?

As Nahuats, we always make arches and offerings. The arches are made from a branch, a stick and they are decorated with *palmilla*, and *xempasutchilt* flowers. That is Nahuatl tradition. There are also dances in which we participate, during the patron saints celebrations. This was being left behind but at the moment we are seeing that it is important because it promotes the rebirth of the culture.

Do you wish to send out a message to women of other countries, of other cultures?

Well, I would simply like to say, to all the women that have not yet joined a women's organization, I invite you from this corner of Laguasteca-Potosina, to participate and for us to begin leaving fear aside. That is what inhibits us most. But, yes, I invite you to participate in an organization. It is difficult but we have to do whatever is possible to participate. Thank you. ♡

The Right to Love and Politics: An Indigenous Activist's Perspective

Eulalia Yagarí González, a Chami woman activist in Colombia, was elected as a member of the regional parliament of Antioquia on March 8, 1992 (International Women's Day). In this interview, she speaks to us of her life and hardships as an Indian woman activist. Eulalia is convinced that the struggle of Indians in Colombia for land, culture, and autonomy must be conducted on many different fronts simultaneously. Her struggle is not only relevant to Indigenous communities but to all oppressed people in Colombia, particularly women.

Interview with **Eulalia Yagarí González**

Why did you agree to be an Indian candidate for the senate elections?

Before I answer your question, let me just say that the political participation of Indian women is nothing new. We have always been involved in politics in the sense that we've always defended our interests, our tradition, our culture, our fellow men as well as our whole people and our land. We fought for 500 years until our voices were finally heard. Now Colombia has a new constitution. A certain sector of the Indian population, Blacks, and other ethnic groups have united in a political alliance, which will not only defend Indian interests and rights, but also those of Black people, the lower classes—in fact all marginalized groups.

When they were looking for candidates and they noticed that I'd been politically active for twelve years and was committed to the rights of women, children and our entire people, they chose me. Actually I only agreed to the candidature after they approached me for the third time. But as an Indian

woman I don't just want to fight for the interests of Indian women, I also want to fight for the rights of all women in this society, the workers, the *campesinas*, the Black women who have always been discriminated against until now, the women of other ethnic groups like the Gypsies—basically all women who are politically and socially active in this country. But when I demand their rights I don't just want to make superficial political speeches. No, if I get elected to the Senate, I'll fight for quite specific proposals and projects promoting the social development of women: the right to prenatal care, for recognition of women's participation, and power for women to achieve their right to work and decent jobs, not just jobs that are almost beyond physical endurance.

What could Indigenous women achieve in the senate if they were elected?

We could start by implementing everything the new constitution has assured us of. We must form alliances with other progressive forces, with spe-

cific groups on the left, but also on the right. We'll see what the politicians will actually do. Of course, in the election campaign, they promised all sorts of things. Personally I don't have any illusions about what I can do for the Colombian people, firstly because I'm aware of my limitations and secondly because we don't have the financial means. We have far too little power in the state to really change society. All I can do is simply devote all my strength and intelligence to the task in hand. I'll also use my feminine cunning, because in all honesty, we women are very cunning. Women are capable of a great deal. It's just that we've always been undermined. Our rights were taken away from us and we were undervalued. Women were there for sex, child-rearing and maybe the odd bit of politics. We never had any more space than that. So we're well-placed to flirt with our bodies, but also with our intelligence, our discerning nature and with our cunning. We have many abilities we can use to change this society. As an Indian woman, I can't speak such high



Erasmo, San Juan Quichá

class Spanish as a big politician, but that doesn't mean I have no right to be heard. Despite all my limitations, I intend to fight in the senate—albeit cautiously, because the senate is a completely new ball game for us.

You just said you only let yourself be nominated as a candidate after the third invitation. Why were you so hesitant initially and why did you accept in the end?

Basically I never wanted to get into big politics. I've been pushed into it. The work in the senate seemed to me like the struggle of a little fish faced with a shark. And besides, this work means giving both my daughters to someone else to look after. I've also got a partner who's politically active as well.

I have a difficult relationship with him. We love each other but our political struggle in this quagmire of violence and war makes it impossible for couples to live in peace with one another. We're not the only ones in this position in Colombia. Hundreds of us women, Indian women, *campesinas*, women from the popular movements, workers and trade unionists aren't able to have happy relationships with their partners. Commitment to the cause takes away the ability and time for love. Relationships often break up, because there's a lack of opportunity for the joys and pleasures of love, affection and togetherness. Sometimes we're only at home for one or two days and often only for one night. There's no time to sleep with each other or even just stroll

along the street together. And there's no time to keep the family together or bring up the children properly.

Who are your children growing up with?

With relatives. But of course an aunt or granny can't replace a mother. You can't just switch emotional ties. Traditionally, we Indian women always have our children with us. Indian children grow up differently from other children. From birth we carry children around with us. In many communities they're only weaned when they're five or six. I suckled Marcela for four years. Because of my work I had to wean Patricia after two years. I think this long and close relationship early on helps Indian communities to develop a strong sense of solidarity. We may well have political differences, but we still feel ourselves to be Indigenous people.

Today our children, the children of the popular leaders, are growing up with traumas and psychological problems as a result of the permanent state of war. They have no home, no parents who love each other, they don't feel protected and they don't have a good education. Lots of children are constantly in day-nurseries. We leaders and women at the head of the popular movements sometimes find ourselves on our own in the end, not because of the political work in itself, but because it's being conducted in a war situation.

You're a member of the Antioquia Organization of Indigenous Peoples (OIA). What type of women's program do you have in the OIA?

We don't have a specific women's program which reflects the fact that very few women are in leadership positions. Cristiania is an Indian community where many politicians like to have a finger in the pie. Women have achieved a lot of political space but many are not in a position to take on political functions. In my opinion we need a new policy for liberating women, but I don't mean a policy like the ones introduced here from Europe and North America.



Photo: SAIC Archives

"Women are capable of a great deal. It's just that we've always been undermined." -EYG

The cultures and societies are totally different there.

My positive image of women is not just limited to Indian women. I feel that women in general are amazing, lovely creatures. Women—Indian and black women, French, Cubans, Soviet citizens, Chinese women—all women are the most beautiful people in the world.

On the other hand, some women who used to suffer and were repressed and put up with being beaten, have managed to liberate themselves. But what happened? They now act like they're on another planet and behave just like men. I know it's great to feel free at last. But do we really want this type of freedom? I don't think so. I want liberated women to strive for something different. Women must change the course of this universe. But to do this we're going to need all our willpower.

How do you defend yourself against machismo?

Well, I've had to put up with all kinds of stuff. There are foolish, uncouth types who shout at you and don't let you finish speaking. So you have to grit your teeth and say to them:

"listen, you may be physically stronger, but I've got more inside my head. And if we're seriously fighting for the same cause, then no one just gives orders and no one just obeys." On the political circuit I've put up with some difficult situations. If they're traveling with a woman as a member of a delegation, the men are right in there trying to go to bed with her. And afterwards they've got nothing better to do than talk about it and then it becomes the latest gossip. "Oh, so you went to bed with her, as well? And what was she like?" After that the woman is finished politically. A friend of mine was done for because 15 men claimed to have slept with her. And they laughed themselves stupid over it. That's machismo in its purest form. As a woman involved in politics, you still have to deal with stuff like that.

But we can't wage this struggle the same way everywhere. You have to go about it differently when you're dealing with women who think of themselves as the slave at home and nothing else. In this country there are still a lot of women who believe they can't experience any sexual pleasure because that's simply a man's prerogative. Many allow themselves to be repressed by their

husbands all their lives without even realizing it.

Don't you think that's gradually changing?

Certainly there are women who think the same way I do and are working towards a different educational policy. But it's not just a question of discussing things with men because men as individuals and the system which represses are not one and the same thing. Men are also our lovers, our friends and our brothers. The problem is that in Colombia and in the whole of Latin America there are still far too few men who acknowledge our true worth.

What will you do if you don't get into the senate?

I'll work in the communities again. I have a piece of land I'll cultivate. I enjoy tilling the soil, sowing, harvesting. I'm actually a campesina. I used to grow coffee. I worked hard at it and carried heavy loads. But with the money I earned, I used to buy myself nice clothes. I'd happily do that again. 🍷

Adapted from *Compañeras*, Gaby Küppers (ed.), London: LAB and Monthly Review Press, 1992.

Absent Visions: A Commentary on the Women's Conference in Beijing

Last year more than 28,000 women from 185 countries met to attend the Fourth World Conference of Women, from the 4th to the 15th of September, in the city of Beijing, China. This conference was organized by the United Nations in order to receive the input of women from all parts of the world to influence the Platform of Action, a document on women's rights, which was on the United Nations' agenda. The limited preparation and participation of Indigenous women in the conference is due to many factors beyond the control of the Delegation of Latin American Indigenous Women. Unfortunately, as other sources have said, the organizational structure and the agenda of the conference did not offer equal conditions of participation to Indigenous women.

From the beginning, there was a limited flow of information between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. The former had little access to contacts, information, and financial resources. From the level of the United Nations to the non-governmental organizations, space was not granted them as organized people. This was one of the biggest complaints that came out of the Meeting of Indigenous Women of the First Nations of Abya Yala, held from July 31 to August 4, 1995, in Ecuador.

The location of the conference made it hard for Indigenous women to attend. Only 30 Indigenous women arrived, an abysmal number (consider the number of Indigenous nations in the Americas). Getting funds to cover the costs of the flight was a great difficulty. Thus, in spite of the huge interest they expressed to attend this event, they were once again not able to partake in decision making processes that will affect their lives.

As stated above, the same financial factors and lack of support and commu-

nication hampered the preparatory continental meeting in Ecuador where some 150 women from 24 nationalities and communities met to elaborate their proposals to be sent to Beijing. The meeting took place later than planned, and as a result the Indigenous women's proposals were not received in time to be submitted in the final document of the Platform of Action.

In spite of these limitations, their proposals were presented in writing to the conference. Their document presented the vision of Indigenous women of Abya Yala, emphasizing the challenges of self-determination and the survival as a distinct peoples. Among others, the Declaration of Indigenous Women in Beijing put forward the following proposals and demands:

- (1) Recognize and respect our right to self-determination;
- (2) Recognize and respect our right to our territories and development, education, and health;
- (3) Stop human rights violations and all forms of violence against Indigenous women;
- (4) Recognize and respect our cultural and intellectual inheritance and our right to control the biological diversity in our territories;
- (5) Assure the political participation of Indigenous women and amplify their capabilities and their access to resources.

Essentially, the document stressed Indigenous territory as a key for the existence of Indigenous peoples. It also touched on intellectual property rights, which the women felt should be respected. It also called for the ratification of International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 169 along with other declarations on the rights of Indigenous peoples. The Plan of Action of the World Conference of Women in Beijing, howev-

er, emphasized the economic problems that affect women, the globalization of the economy, and international women's rights—terms and concepts that few Indigenous women have experienced directly.

Another issue was the Indigenous Women's Delegation's concern over the agreement in Beijing that an investigation occur on Indigenous knowledge of health and management of natural resources. Indigenous women want to take part in the study and not only be its objects. They recognize the necessity of their participation so that the study include the Indigenous vision.

If one analyzes the theme of "human rights" in the Beijing proposal, it becomes clear that Indigenous women envision these "rights" differently. Indigenous women do not see themselves as competing with men. They have a more integral vision of themselves—not as individuals, but more as part of a community. In situations where women work in the formal economy, the resulting mentality is a competition between women and men. For most indigenous women, work is something shared in a community, and not a competition. Thus, the right of equality between Indigenous men and women is inseparable from this system of production where the concept of duality predominates, meaning that man and woman complement each other in what they think, do, and say.

Indigenous women's lack of participation was a significant weakness in Beijing. It illustrates the necessity for us to devise new strategies so that our vision can become an integral component of the broader women's movement, a presence to be recognized especially during watershed encounters like the Beijing conference. ♡

Empowering Native Women: New Initiatives to Reclaim Indigenous Women's Status in Central America

Paying attention to women's roles as managers of territories and transmitters of cultural identity, we focus on two regions of Central America where small-scale Indigenous women's initiatives are encountering success at re-inserting women as dynamic members of their societies.

By *Laura Hobson Herlihy*

Indigenous women's involvement with conservation, development, and human rights organizations has given them new political and economic power in the Honduran Mosquitia and in Panama. Conservation efforts have almost always focused on men's role in economic activities and their use of natural resources. However, focusing attention on the important role of women as managers of community territories and transmitters of language and cultural identity provides glimpses of the emerging empowerment process that many Indigenous women are presently experiencing in Central America. In this article I present the case of the Miskito and Tawahka of Mosquitia and the Kuna, Emberá, and Ngobe-Bugle Guaymí in Panama.

Majao: A Women's Market in Moskitia

The Tawahka Sumu (population 700) live along the upper reaches of the Río Patuca in the Honduran Mosquitia. High atop cleared river banks, houses cluster to form the villages of Krausirpe, Krautara, Yapuwás,

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A resurgence and re-valorization of Indigenous women's status is possible through their own organization and involvement with conservation, development, conservation, development, and human rights organizations.

Kamakasma, and Wasparasní. Krausirpe, the biggest village, has a population of about 400. Because few Indigenous women in Mosquitia still weave bags made from rainforest plants, I was surprised to find Tawahka women weaving bags made from the *majao* (*Heliocarpus Donell-Smithii*) tree.

The women explained that FITH (Federación Indígena Tawahka de Honduras)—a legally recognized Indigenous federation that represents the Tawahka people—initiated a local market in the late 1980s to purchase their woven *majao* bags. In order to be marketed in Tegucigalpa as “book bags” or “purses,” FITH representatives requested that women weave smaller,

multi-colored, bags with a long shoulder strap. A few years later, MOPAWI (Mosquitia Pawisa), a non-profit development agency in Honduras, took over FITH's bag-making project and incorporated it into their “Formación de la Mujer” program, which has helped improve women's socioeconomic status in Mosquitia by providing them with local cash-earning opportunities. Marketing woven *majao* bags is a positive element in Tawahka Sumu society. Bag manufacturing is not harmful to the rainforest environment and it provides a mechanism through which women pass down traditional knowledge to their daughters while, at the same time, providing income for their households. In the process, the

Photo: Laura Hobson Herlihy

women's *majao* bags have become one of the recognizable symbols of their broader struggle for their own identity and cultural survival.

Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve

Just north and contiguous to the Tawahka zone is the Rio Platano Biosphere Reserve. It was established under the United Nations' Man and the Biosphere Program in 1980 to protect the natural and cultural heritage of this special part of Honduras. The Miskito, the largest Indigenous group in the reserve, lived in 19 villages with a population of 4,500.

In Kuri, a small Miskito village (population 122) on the Caribbean coast, Indigenous-held territories within the biosphere are passed down through the female line. Sisters built their homes around their mother's patio and reared their children together as one greater family. Women inherited both coastal village and rainforest territories from their mother, known as *Mama Almuk* or *Kuka*, the powerful grandmother figure, village elder, and head of the matrilineal group.

Miskito men lived away from the coastal villages for long periods of time, earning cash off-shore while diving for lobsters and doing subsistence agricultural work up-river while living on their wives' rainforest territories. With the men gone, women passed down Miskito language and culture to their children in matrilineal residential groups, teaching them traditional kinship terms and women's activities.

Indigenous Women's Congress in Panama

Farther down the isthmus, in a broader and unprecedented way, Indigenous women in Panama recently organized an annual, national-level congress called "Mujer Indígena de Panamá" with the help of non-governmental development organizations (NGOs), including UNICEF-Panama, the United Nations, and the Centro de

Estudios y Acción Social Panameño (CEASPA). I attended the first Indigenous women's congress in 1993. Nearly 100 Kuna, Emberá, and Ngobe-Bugle Guaymí women met over a weekend to discuss their common problems and goals in this Central American country. First, the participants analyzed the political, legal, social, economic, and cultural involvement of Indigenous women in Panama. Next, they analyzed the history and status of women in each culture group. The objectives of the meeting were to promote the participation of *werara* (Emberá woman), *merv* (Guaymí woman), and *ome* (Kuna woman) as one force, and to formulate propositions to be included in the "Plan Nacional de la Mujer." At the end of the three day meeting, the Kuna, Guaymí, and Emberá leaders proposed that the "Plan" should include, among other programs, education, health care, land titling, and work opportunities (including the marketing of arts and crafts) for all Indigenous people in Panamá.

Beyond this, some Indigenous women in Panamá also hold local and regional political offices. Celia Mezua, President of the Emberá "Congreso General," holds one of the most powerful Indigenous political positions in the country. As President of the Congreso, Mezua presides over a council of leaders who make important cultural, political, and economic decisions concerning the Emberá. The daughter of a former *cacique* (chief), Mezua graduated from the national university, became a local leader, and was then elected to regional leadership positions.

During the first Indigenous women's meeting in Panamá, Mezua called out for justice and decried the government's taking of a Ngobe Guaymí man's life, and for their use of tear gas against pregnant Indigenous women who had recently demonstrated in Panamá City. She also called for the national legislature to approve the law recognizing the Guaymí Comarca homeland. Likewise, she demanded



Photo: Laura Hobson Herlihy

A *Mama Almuk* or *Kuka*, the powerful grandmother figure and village elder.

that legislators enforce the demarcation of the already existing Kuna and Emberá Comarca boundaries and for the removal of newly settled colonists within their limits. Newspaper reporters recorded the event and these demands in the national press. That the government did not respond to all of them did not diminish the significance of this event. For the first time in Panamá's history, Indigenous women, coming from different cultural identities, acted together in unified opposition to the national government. Mezua and the other Indigenous women leaders continue to pressure the government concerning their territorial and human rights. The Indigenous women's congress meets annually to discuss these and related issues.

Indigenous women in Panamá and Honduras are aware of the impacts colonialism, including "Modernization" and "Westernization" which have historically subordinated them. Their organized resurgence and self-valorization, as well as their involvement with territorial conservation, their own definition of "development," and collective human rights, are hopeful signs that they will ensure a future for their larger societies for years to come. ♡

“Um Jeito de Vé-los:” Old and New Representations of Indian Peoples in Brazil

by *Gilton Mendes*

This brief article does not seek to treat a new set of informative facts on Indigenous peoples in Brazil, nor even to undertake an exhaustive analysis of unknown aspects of the social lives of Indigenous people. Nor do I represent the voice and politics of Indian people. I wish to problematize two aspects that I consider important: one, the political strategies adopted by Indigenous organizations to confront the new challenges in contemporary Brazil, the other, a brief frame of the actual economic realities by which they are affected.

Background

There exists in Brazil, approximately 200 Indigenous peoples and each presents a set of particularities with respect to its customs, language, and socio-political structures. They vary in population: The majority are numerically small societies (almost always considered, individually, to have been more populous in the past), reduced to a few hundred or at times hardly a few dozen persons. The areas they inhabit vary in size and, in some cases, have already been officially demarcated. The vast majority, however, remain barely delineated and many more have not even been identified or recognized by the federal government. This means that Indigenous peoples in Brazil live in constant insecurity in relation to one of the most essential resources that they have always possessed: the land!

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Indian peoples inhabit environments where they have always existed in singular ways, seeing and interpreting the world in ways that are specific to each. They have established a very intimate and continuous relation with their surroundings, which leads us (or should lead us) to question the rational, dichotomous, and generic vision of mankind and nature, characteristic of “Western society”: on one side humankind and its interests, on the other, nature, static, revealing itself through phenomena...

Indigenous peoples are seen and represented in a form that is almost always negative, both in the elaboration of discourses—which are also practices—as in people’s consciousness, as a consequence of the former.

State policies nearly always fall within the realm of “welfare,” envisioning native communities as dependent on their protection and initiatives. From this point of view, Indian people are seen as in a process of progressive integration into national society, components of a claimed “unitary nation.” The church vision, like that of many non-governmental organizations (NGOs), is not too distant from this continuous provision of welfare and protection, always in a way that fulfills its own interests.

All this would tend towards another level of representation: the internalization of the national society’s cultural values by native peoples themselves, often taking on the role of the “protected,” subject to state politics and programs and actions originating from civil and religious entities. Yet this in no way implies that Indian peoples do not consider themselves individuals belonging to a different society.

New Strategies of Organization?

With completely different cultural realities from national society and with low population numbers, Indigenous peoples in Brazil are faced with huge adversities in the realm of national politics. For this reason, that they have constantly reformulated the forms of resistance and strategies to valorize their rights, their interests, their demands.

Here it is now necessary to mention the fight against the revision of Decree 22/91, which regulated the process of demarcation of Indigenous and other special lands. Presently, the signing of Decree 1.775 by president Fernando Henrique Cardoso has unleashed a new national mobilization, perhaps the largest ever, of entities devoted to the Indigenous cause. This mobilization is calling for the revocation of this Decree, itself a fundamentally altered version of its predecessor as far as the security of Indian lands are concerned. This situation shows a capacity for political catalysis, including one with “international effects.”

It is necessary to draw attention to one of the most relevant aspects of the Brazilian reality which is the conduct of many organizations working in support of Indigenous peoples. These, in general, have taken on the role of mobilization and dissemination of information on communities that are “disadvantaged” in relation to the state and distant from the urban centers and the political decisions, and those with limited contact with national society. In many cases, these organizations integrate themselves thus creating a third coalition phase in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous combine for a single cause and representation.

The ethnic diversity of Indian peoples in Brazil has perhaps been one of the main factors for the generation of resistance initiatives because it has produced a direct relation of multiple local forces capable of mobilizing, internally and intensively as well, each particular society. On the other hand, it's also important to note that the new strategies adopted have been similar to those used by the different social groups of national society. Strategies that, often, result in internal conflicts and difficulties, and are capable of clashing with the more traditional expressions of the different native societies (see Interview with Jacir José de Souza).

A Brief Layout of the Economic Relations

If cultural diversity is reflected in the search for new possibilities for political organization of Indigenous people, in the confrontation against the interests of groups or persons belonging to national society, the same is true in the economic arena.

Each particular society presents a different history of economic relations with surrounding societies. At the same time that some Indigenous peoples are engaged in intense commercial trade, there are others that have had minimal contact with any market. Between these two extremes, there are those who are engaged in seasonal commercial trade.

The decade of the 1970s deeply marked the lives of Indigenous people in Brazil in that, through the elaboration of gigantic "development" projects and in the "interest of national security," the authoritarian state staked out a policy of occupying the Amazon. This opened two bloody wounds: the violent contact with peoples previously isolated, leading to partial or total extermination, and the irresistible incentive for millions of persons to migrate with aim to settle the "terras inabitadas" of the Amazon.

Hundreds of particular undertakings in the Amazon have followed and continue to follow the major roads

leading into the interior, supported by federal incentives (along with scandalous corruption). These cut through tens of thousands of miles of forest and savanna, without the slightest preoccupation for the destruction they entail, both for native peoples and their environment. In the end, natural resources have been wasted, particularly timber, and massive deforestation has followed the installation of rural industries.

Many Indigenous groups, in the face of this stampede, were removed from traditional areas where natural resources abounded and relocated in regions completely unknown to them or already drained of the same



resources. This has resulted in untold hardship, as evidenced by the high rate of suicide existent in groups like the Guarani-Kaiowa.

Many other peoples continue to suffer the consequences of these large-scale projects (dams, timber extraction, mines, roads, factories, fisheries, agro-industries, etc.) established around or even inside their territories. For many, the only option left open is seasonal labor outside of their Indigenous area, selling their labor for ranches or in regional markets at derisory rates, or migration to cities, where they live in conditions of extreme poverty.

Diverse evaluations made of the Indigenous situation in Brazil are practically unanimous in that these trends

have made things much worse: destroying traditional forms of production, sharpening "dependence" on outside aid, and leading to environmental collapse.

In this context, today, perhaps more than ever, the question of Indigenous peoples' relation to the market (the generation of income, the management of natural resources, and the maintenance of an integral, rational, balanced life in relation to the environment) is more complex than ever.

Contemporary initiatives in the field of the Indigenous economy have followed the trend of increased small-scale projects. Governmental programs (as imposed by international finance banks) have encouraged undertakings belonging to the category of "sustainable development" projects. Indigenous organizations themselves and support organizations are inclined to favor economic activities that increment production within Indigenous areas; activities that seek to add value to products destined for specific markets; activities centered around the rationalization and exploration of determined natural resources for a greater participation of native communities in the production and organization of work for commerce.

The positive side of these decisions cannot be denied, just as the results are not grandiose and immediate. Time is being bought to be able, more clearly and decidedly, to find exists that are proper and "independent." On the other hand, one must also inquire if this doesn't constitute a new political strategy utilized by national society, geared towards its own economic interests, aiming at the incorporation of new markets, especially those held as "alternative."

In the end, one must finally ask, to what extent these initiatives constitute *de facto* something new, or are they leading Indigenous people, once again, into "modern" and sophisticated schemes of economic exploitation.

* Title: "A Way of Seeing Them"

Decree 1775: An Attack on Indian Lands in Brazil

"Decree 1775 is more than a setback; it's a death sentence for many Indigenous groups."—
COIAB (Council of Indigenous Peoples and Organizations of Brazil)

Indigenous organizations and their allies initiated a major campaign of resistance after Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso signed Decree 1775, responsible for the demarcation of Indian lands, on January 8th, 1996. As the cherished baby of Minister of Justice Nelson Jobim, Decree 1775 offers a 90-day period for "states and municipalities containing the area to be demarcated, and other interested parties" to exercise the *contraditório*, or legally contest the process. Additionally, it subjects 344 of the 554 Indian Areas in

from gold miners and ranchers (see article page 20). Now, with Decree 1775, those efforts appear to have been in vain.

Indigenous organizations point out that one of the major problems with Decree 1775 is that it was devised in absence of open debate. Many Indigenous and indigenist entities had requested meetings to discuss the impacts of the decree. CAPOIB, an Indigenous umbrella organization based in Brasília active in the fight against Decree 1775, points out that on August 15th, 1995, President Cardoso assured

equipped to deal with the eminent onslaught of legal claims against Indigenous areas.

In addition, CAPOIB claims that Decree 1775 will create an "industry of indemnities," since it calls for the compensation of parties claiming a loss of land due to demarcation, with titles to show for it. All claims of indemnity made on Indigenous areas not yet registered are valid. The agribusiness company Colonizadora Terranorte Ltda. already solicited compensation for lands belonging to the Enawene-Nawe Indigenous

area in Mato Grosso state; a sum to the tune of 7.6 million Brazilian reais (US\$7.9 million).

In Pará state

alone, the summed indemnities for all contested Indigenous areas would reach approximately US\$1.4 billion.

Indigenous voices say Decree 1775 "risks the lives of Indigenous people," and add that invasions and the proliferation of diseases in indigenous areas will increase. Recent news from Brazil prove this analysis to be correct. According to confirmed and unconfirmed reports, invasions are presently occurring in a host of Indigenous areas, including Barão de Antonina (Kaingang), the Mundurucú area in Amazonas, Rio Guamá (Tembé) in Pará, Panambizinho and Sete Cerros (Guarani-Kaiowa), both in Mato Grosso, Coroa Vermelha (Pataxó) in Bahia, Surui and the area of the Uru-Eu-Wau-Wau in Rondonia. Other threatened areas contested by the government and the military for their "strategic value" are Kricati (Maranhão), Baú (Pará), Marãiuapsede (Mato Grosso), and Raposa Serra do Sol near the border with Guyana.

§ 8º Desde o início do procedimento demarcatório até oventa dias após a publicação de que trata o parágrafo anterior, poderão os Estados e municípios em que se localiza a área sob demarcação e demais interessados manifestar-se, apresentando ao órgão federal de assistência ao Índio razões instruídas com todas as provas pertinentes, tais como títulos dominiais, laudos periciais, pareceres, declarações de testemunhas, fotografias e mapas, para o fim de pleitear indenização ou para demonstrar vícios, totais ou parciais, do relatório de que trata o parágrafo anterior.

Brazil to revision because they have yet to be entered into the country's official land registry. Armed with such legal backing, contenders of Indian lands have already started invading and staking their claims inside Indigenous territories. Indigenous organizations and NGOs in Brazil, in solidarity with international forces, are working to pressure the Brazilian state to revoke the new decree.

What's Wrong with Decree 1775?

Indigenous forces and indigenist NGOs have been unanimous in their protest of the new decree. After the passing of Decree 22/91, which in fact allowed for the demarcation of several Indigenous Areas, many Indigenous nations fought especially hard to demarcate their land. The Macuxi in Raposa Serra do Sol, for example, have been leading an international campaign for demarcation, to secure their territory

them that he would not make any decision without discussing the matter in detail with Indigenous organizations. Even after the signing of Decree 1775, Minister Jobim was quoted as saying, referring to Brazilian NGOs leading the international campaign against the decree, "These groups are not interested in solving the indigenous problem. They are interested in creating problems and we will have no dialogue with those who cause problems" (*Folha de São Paulo*, Feb. 6).

In a clever fashion, Decree 1775 effectively paralyzes land demarcation by subjecting the process to the interminable bureaucracy of legal court battles over land. FUNAI (National Indian Foundation), which has historically lacked anthropologists and lawyers, will be responsible for carrying out required legal, geographical, and ethnographic work prior to any demarcation or as part of any revision. FUNAI, however, is ill-

According to Jobim, the new decree abides by the constitution (section 55 of article 5) because it guarantees a third party the right to contest a judicial process through the *contraditório*, a "basic element of democracy", says Jobim. He also argues that the court cases against Decree 22/91 stalled in the Federal Supreme Court will no longer have a base now that the new decree contains this clause; otherwise, all the areas demarcated under decree 22/91 could have been declared unconstitutional. For Jobim, the Brazilian government's image will improve because they have fixed a legal "error" that will finally put a stop to the endless demarcation procedures.

However, one of the strongest arguments against the new decree, and one adopted by a number of leftist political leaders in Brazil, is that it goes against the spirit of the Brazilian constitution. The Brazilian constitution states that, with regards to traditional Indian lands, it is the duty of the "Union to demarcate them, protect them, and assure the respect

of all of their resources." Many argue that the new Decree prevents this basic duty from being fulfilled.

"It frightens us to see that the government intends to revitalize, with the new decree, titles to land that the constitution regards as 'null and void,' since they were created centuries ago when the land was clearly Indigenous," says Congressman Nilmario Miranda (President of the Committee for Human Rights of the Chamber of Deputies).

Jobim is wasting no time in implementing Decree 1775. Soon after the passing of the decree, he sent letters to several governors primarily in the Amazon region listing for them the areas to be revised in their respective states. For example, in a letter to the governor of Pará state dated the 11th of January, he listed 14 Indigenous areas up for revision, including two whose combined area is only 58 hectares.

Indigenous Peoples and NGOs React

A well articulated number of forces, from Indigenous organizations and NGOs in Brazil to human rights, environment, church groups, and even some governments around the world formed in response to the reversal of policy on Indigenous lands in Brazil. Strategies for revoking the decree have varied, but the majority center on directly pressuring the Brazilian state through letters, the press, faxes, and other similar means.

Interesting, too, has been the route taken by CAPOIB—representing more than 100 Indigenous groups in Brazil—which sent a letter to the World Bank and the ambassadors of the G-7 countries and the European Union requesting the "temporary suspension of resources destined for projects which have among other priorities the demarcation of Indigenous lands, such as Projeto Terras Indígenas, Planaforo, and Prodeagro," since those funds would likely fall prey to the legal quagmire which

Party and a strongly worded protest letter signed by 80 environmental and human rights groups sent to President Cardoso from the Coalition in Support of Amazonian Peoples and Their Environment, a coordinating body based in Washington DC. The letter exhorts him to revoke the Decree. The Coalition counts amongst its members most of the well known US environmental and pro-Indigenous organizations such as National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense Fund, Sierra Club, International Rivers Network, Rain Forest Action Network, Amanaka'a, and SAIIC. The Coalition plans to support the efforts of Brazilian indigenous and human rights organizations and will discuss funding development projects linked to indigenous areas in Brazil with multinational agencies.

Decree 1775 must be viewed within the larger context of the long term plans held by a consortium of governmental and private interests to develop large areas of the Amazon basin and other nat-

Art 9° Nas demarcações em curso, cujo decreto homologatório não tenha sido objeto de registro em cartório imobiliário ou na Secretaria do Patrimônio da União do Ministério da Fazenda, os interessados poderão manifestar-se, nos termos do § 8° do art 2°, no prazo de noventa dias, contados da data da publicação deste Decreto.

promises to ensue from the revision of dozens of existing Indigenous areas. The CAPOIB document claims that "since it took office over a year ago, the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso has been putting in place a deliberate policy of reduction of indigenous territories."

Indigenous organizations are also calling for the cancelation of German funds (\$22 million) donated to Brazil after the 1992 Earth Summit for the protection of tropical rainforests (Pilot Program for the Protection of Tropical Rainforests). Part of that effort included funds specifically destined for the demarcation of Indian Areas. Indigenous groups point out that Decree 1775 does not comply with the objectives of the grant and they fear that some of the funding from Germany could be diverted to the revision of existing areas.

Other major efforts against the decree include a motion of unconstitutionality put forward by the Brazilian Workers

ural areas, as with the mammoth Hidrovía project (see page 28), and progressively integrate the entire region into the national and international economic system. In defiance of the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples declared by the United Nations in 1993, the new decree sets down the foundations for a future of large scale development unimpeded by Indigenous groups staking claims to their traditional lands and resources. ♣

You can support the efforts of Indigenous peoples in Brazil by sending, faxing, or emailing your letters of protest to the following addresses:

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Republic, Palácio do Planalto, Brasília - DF - 70.160-900, Fax: 55-61-226-7566, email: pr@cr-df.rnp.br; Nelson Jobim, Minister of Justice, Esplanada dos Ministerios-Bloco T, Brasília - DF - 70.064-900, Fax: 55-61-224-2448, email: njobim@ax.apc.org

Fighting for a Macuxi Homeland

Macuxi leader Jacir José de Souza is a well known Indigenous activist from the Raposa Serra do Sol Indian area, Brazil. After 25 grueling years of work, this area has yet to be demarcated and has been the site of numerous killings and human rights violations (see Noticias de Abya Yala, Vol. 9 No. 1). Now, the revocation of Decree 22/91 puts a cloud over the prospects of official demarcation. In this interview, not yet knowing the outcome of the revision of Decree 22/91, Jacir confides in SAIIC the hardships faced by the Macuxi people and the often conflicting process of organization and representation that occurs in a common struggle.

Interview with Jacir José De Souza

Why and how did you start fighting for the Macuxi people?

I'm from the *maloca* (village) of Maturuca, in the state of Roraima, Brazil. Our land had been invaded, but the *tuxaua* (chief) of our *Maloca* wasn't responding. On April 27, 1987, we had a meeting and I was chosen to lead the effort to defend our community, to replace the *Tuxaua* of the *maloca*. Our first step was ending alcoholism, which the *garimpeiros* (gold prospectors) were bringing into our community. Then, we started to organize other communities and work with the other *Tuxauas*. Still, they thought I was new, and lacked experience. I argued that, for the future, we had to take action on our own behalf. The government was never going to do anything. FUNAI wouldn't help us. Our efforts continued; communities started helping each other, clearing fields, building houses.

I took this experience of working with the *Tuxauas* to the annual general assembly. I chose four people in my *maloca* (village), went to the assembly, and told all the *Tuxauas* about the village council we had formed. The reaction was pretty negative: They said, "What, you won't respect the *Tuxaua* any more, and there won't be a legitimate authority?" But, when they saw the results of our work, they agreed to unite and work together.

In 1987, we decided to extend our organization to the city to work for the demarcation of our land. I suggested 12 people, from all the communities, to start. In April, 1987, we went to all the *malocas*, explaining what we wanted to do, that in Maturuca we already had a council, and that this was for the future of our children. The people agreed.

After one month we went to the city. We had no house or anything. FUNAI didn't want to help us. So, we went to talk with a bishop, Don Aldo Mongiano, and he said he could provide a house we could use. We divided up the work. Three people stayed in the city, and the others returned to the *malocas*. After a while, the process was reversed. We set up a place where people could go for help.

After two years, everyone was with us. I was in the middle of everything. We bought another house for an office in Boa Vista. People brought food from the villages. We put together a small project that received support.

In 1988, we had a meeting in Manaus with COIAB (Brazilian Indigenous Peoples and Organizations Articulating Council). There was an election, and six people were chosen including me. I told them I didn't have enough experience, and that this is a

very big city. But, they convinced me and told me it would be fine.

By 1990, we were doing well. Then, there was an outbreak of malaria in my *maloca*. Many people fell sick. My wife was one of them, and she died. When I got back to Boa Vista, they wanted me to work for the Council, but I said I had to take care of my children. When I got back to the *maloca*, they said you can't leave. A *Tuxaua* is a *Tuxaua*.

After four months, they chose me to coordinate the region, where there are 5,000 people in 48 villages. I agreed to coordinate things from my home.

Our organization, the Indigenous Council of Roraima (CIR), now has diverse personnel, including a lawyer and an agronomist. Since we divided up into eight regions, some stay in their areas while others work in the city. Now, we are even travelling to other countries. In September, the vice-coordinator went to Italy where he met with other organizations.

Today, I am here. Our work to defend our rights continues.

What are the principal problems faced by Macuxi communities?

At the beginning of 1995, the state government wanted to build a dam on the Cotingo River, within the Indian area Raposa Serra do Sol. They sent the mili-

tary police who destroyed a house, beat up the *Tuxaua*, and kicked people out and burned a house. We resisted. We held that it was illegal to do this in an Indigenous area. We contacted the attorney general and FUNAI. We explained how they had beaten many people. Later, the federal government decided to bring in energy from Venezuela, so things calmed down.

The state government was doing this to hold up the demarcation [of our land]. The army came into the area, also destroying houses. We had a meeting and called the military and little by little they left.

Then in October, they proposed creating a town, a municipality within Raposa Serra do Sol. How could they get away with this? They called for a plebiscite and scheduled a day to hold it. They brought electronic voting machines. The ranchers and miners voted, as well as the Indians.

In another plebiscite a year ago the results were annulled because the Indians knew about it, and being well-organized, boycotted it. Now they pulled a new maneuver, announcing the plebiscite with only two days of advance notice. The Indians didn't have a chance to organize. They brought computers, which people had not seen before. Needing assistance, they could not vote in privacy. Now, they say they will build a city near Maturuca. We believe this is to destabilize the Indian movement, and to prevent the demarcation of the area.

So, I'm very concerned. It's a very serious problem.

How many years have *garimpeiros* been inside the area?

It's been about 25 years. They started working manually. Then, machinery was brought in. In the last seven years, they brought in dredging equipment, destroying the rivers, polluting them with mercury, leaving them filthy.

When the federal government took the miners out of the Yanomami area in 1989-90, many came to the Macuxi area. This was when *salci-parum* malaria—the most serious kind—became rampant.



Photo: Greg Roney, Amazonia & Amazon Network

Jacir Jose de Souza (right) during Amazon Week VI, 1995, during a panel on Indigenous Rights.

We built a blockade and stayed there months, not letting anyone or any vehicles pass. Then, FUNAI sent the federal police in 1992 to expel everyone. We managed to kick out 600 *garimpeiros*. The ranchers inside the area also began to leave. One of the meanest, named Jai, left after destroying many of our houses. Now, this area is clean, and the forest is beginning to grow.

So, today, there are very few cattle inside. But, with the support of the state government, some remained. Now, there is a lot of pressure to establish a municipality. The fight is getting serious, and we can't give in.

Did you speak with Minister Jobim?

It's difficult. We've tried three times to schedule a meeting. We tried to speak to the president in New York, but we couldn't. Some of our members have spoken with the minister, but hear that he is going to sign the decree [decree 1.775].

...and the state government?

The state government, through buying off some of our people and giving them small presents like clothes, got the Indians to say that "the government is

helping us." But this is in the city of Boa Vista, where many Indians are suffering, and can't go back to their village.

Have you received the support from non-Indigenous populations in Roraima?

In any city in Brazil, there are people defending our rights. There are journalists who help us. The church also supports us. FUNAI also sent a decree to the minister recognizing our territorial limits. And, there are many organizations—CIMI (Indigenist Missionary Council), that organization in São Paulo, the CPI (Pro-Indian Commission), in Rio de Janeiro.

So, we're working together. Any place we go, we find allies. But, powerful people with more money stay on top.

What can people here do to help the Macuxi people?

On this trip, I've met other organizations like RAN (Rainforest Action Network), and asked for their help to speak with the government here. People can send letters asking our government to respect Indian people. Everyone can pressure the US government here also.

Continued on page 36

Reflections on a Movement:

CONAIE, Grassroots, and a Vision for the Future

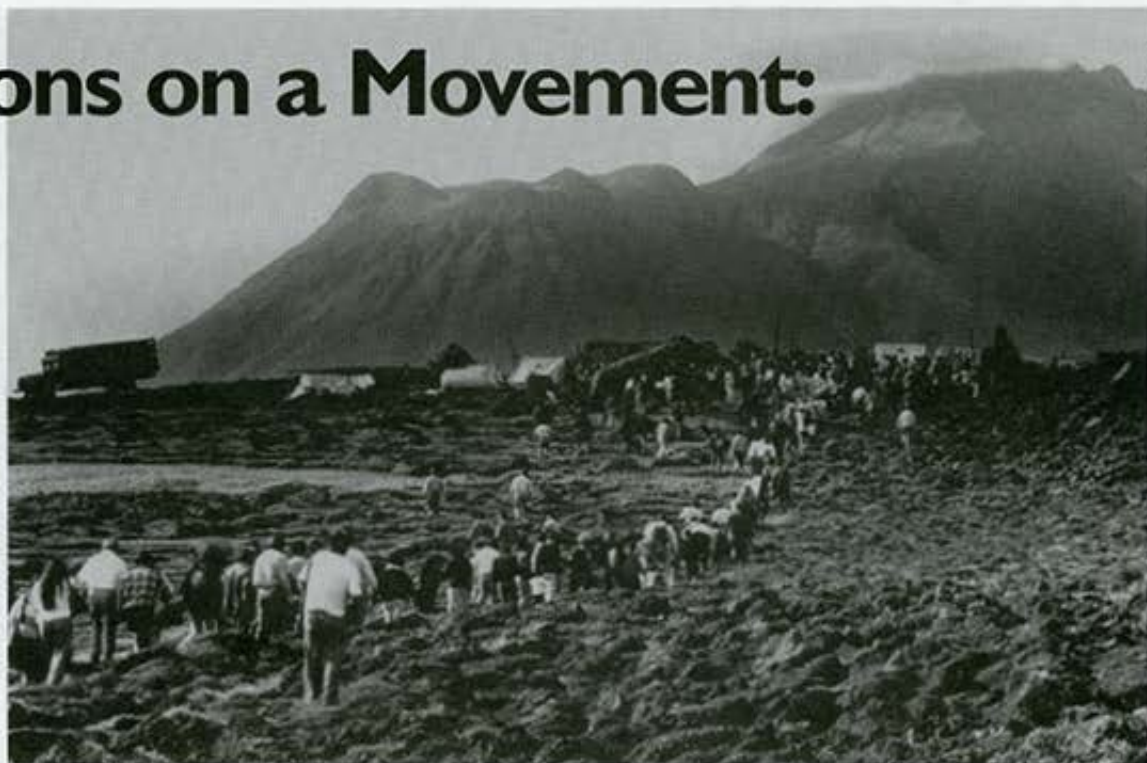


Photo: Dick Sirovick

Interview with **José María Cabascango**

José María Cabascango is a Quichua activist of the Pijal Community, González Suárez Parish, province of Imbabura. Pijal has some seven thousand inhabitants and only 600 hectares of land. With intimate knowledge of that community, José María Cabascango, an activist since the 70s, reached a position of prominence in CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador). As Secretary of International Relations, he has traveled extensively throughout Europe and the Americas. In this interview, he reflects upon the accomplishments and the future of the continental Indigenous movement from the perspective of Ecuador.

What are the principal accomplishments of CONAIE and other communal organizations that you have seen in your years of work?

Since the 1940s and 1950s, organizations were born all over Ecuador; peasant organizations, even Indigenous organizations such as the Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios (Ecuadorian Federation of Indians), headed by Dolores Cacuango, a woman of struggle in those days. Unfortunately, those organizations were controlled by political parties (like the Communist and Socialist party), the Catholic and

Evangelical churches, and by the labor movement. Therefore, they definitely were not autonomous and independent organizations.

In the years of 1972, 1974, ECUARUNARI began organizing itself with force and with many problems and conflicts with the Church. Then it became independent, initiating the reconstruction of Indigenous peoples' collective identity. In those years there were three main points of focus: the struggle against racism, because racism was very strong; the struggle for the recuperation and legalization of the ter-

ritories, one of the most important points; and the struggle for an indigenous education. Here, two primary demands were articulated: on the one hand, that [indigenous] languages be recognized officially by the Ecuadorian state, and that education be administered in our own languages. These are very important experiences that were initiated in those times.

Today, racism has not ended. Racism appears in economic exploitation and the violation of human rights. Racism exists in the behavior of civil society. But it is not as visible as before.

Little by little we have managed to make the non-Indigenous society understand that it too has Indigenous blood and that we definitely are dynamic peoples, with a millennial history, and our own territories. I indeed would like to emphasize this aspect of the struggle against racism that is one of the principal accomplishments; the President of the Republic himself is speaking of a "multi-ethnic Ecuador."

With regard to the Indigenous territories, I believe there are advancements. We were able to recuperate some lands although often under a veritable state of siege. There are *compañeros* that were assassinated and persecuted. But we managed to consolidate, at least in part, our territorial space. In the same way, Indigenous peoples in the Amazon and Coast were able to legalize their own territories, which is an important aspect. Therefore, despite powerful interests such as those of the multinational, oil, mineral, and other industries, and those of the Ecuadorian state, we managed to legalize, at least in part, those territories.

In 1988 we managed to get bilingual inter-cultural education institutionalized. Yes, there are many problems, many administrative, technical, and pedagogical difficulties, but nevertheless it is a move forward. Today for example, there are plans to create, in higher education, an Indigenous university. I believe this is an advancement.

What has been the experience of the communities living in this time of change?

All of these accomplishments, evident in today's daily life, have repercussions and are felt in the communities. For example, in the case of my community, nascent conflicts are no longer referred to the authorities comprised of political entities, courts, judges, and county and provincial authorities. They are resolved within the same community. This is a real control wielded by our own authorities which have the capacity to create a "legislation" proper to the community.

CONAIE surprised the world with its project to form a multinational country and take up Indigenous "legal" traditions to create Indigenous legal structures in Ecuador. Do you see a contradiction between this ambitious project and wanting to return to working directly with the communities?

We have always said that it is important to work on all fronts. The political, juridical, economic, social, and cultural projects that we have initiated have to continue forward, because these have an effect at the community level. I believe that Indigenous peoples in Ecuador have been the originators of many initiatives, and there exists a popular backing across Ecuadorian society for our work; these are not propositions that are only in the interest of Indigenous peoples, but rather propositions to inaugurate a new society and attempt to resolve the huge problems of social crisis, hunger, and poverty.

From the moment we initiated the struggle until 1993, there was generalized state repression. Then, thanks to the struggle that rose in national and international solidarity, little by little the military presence in the communities diminished. I believe this is an extremely important achievement.

In the case of my community, all are working diligently to acquire new infrastructure, to develop water works, and the like. We, like CONAIE, are worried about how to provide training in administrative matters.

Two events in Ecuador where the Indigenous organizations and CONAIE have had an important role: the Indigenous mobilization against the Agrarian Reform Law (*Ley de Reforma Agraria*) in June of 1994, and the border war with Peru. Did the effectiveness of CONAIE contrast strongly in these two events?

To summarize, around 1993 the industrial sectors like the big agro-industrial companies worked out a project for an agrarian reform law (*Ley de Desarrollo Agrario*). We as Indigenous

peoples and peasant organizations of the country also worked out a proposal for agrarian reform. In June of '93, we all presented these before the Ecuadorian parliament. There were three proposals: one from the government, one from the landowner and agro-industrialist sector, and another from the Indigenous and peasant organizations united in the National Agrarian Coordination (*Coordinadora Agraria Nacional*). In the end CONAIE's proposal was stalled or even thrown out, I don't remember exactly what happened.

In 1994, the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) demanded that \$80 million be transferred to the agrarian sector, which it saw as archaic. Then it demanded a change in the agrarian law. Worried, the government urgently sent a project to the National Congress so that in fifteen days they could approve that law. When we reviewed it, we saw that it was the shortened version of what the landowners had presented in 1993. Nevertheless, it was pushed forward and approved.

The Indigenous movement reacted very quickly. The entire country mobilized—organizations allied with CONAIE, popular organizations involved and not involved in the agrarian issue. Now, why? On the one hand, the law proposed the privatization of community lands and natural resources, especially of water. It threatened to do away with peasant organization. It was a retrograde law; what they wanted was to return to the *hacienda* system, gain ownership of all our resources, and definitely implant an ideology of individualism, of market competition.

Historically, it was a very important moment. For the first time, Indigenous organizations demanded from the government the revocation of a law that went against the majority of the Ecuadorian people—not just Indigenous people. Also, for the first time in Latin American history, a president sat at the negotiation table with an Indigenous

Photo: © S. Lobo, 1986



José María Cabascango, a long-time activist, in a 1986 interview.

trying to negotiate with the oil companies. The national government would say, "Not one step backward! We're going to defend the territory, our sovereignty!" But at the same time they were handing over this "sovereignty" to the oil companies! What are we supposed to make of that? In the Ecuadorian parliament they were approving measures to privatize petroleum resources, electrical energy, telephone industries, and the social security system of the country, the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security (IESS)! So, what "sovereignty" do they speak of?

The U.N. declared 1993 as the "Year of the Indigenous Peoples" and in 1994 they declared a Decade of Indigenous Peoples. Has this been beneficial for Indigenous peoples?

Well I believe that at the international level, we have progressed a bit with regard to our rights. In 1992, Rigoberta Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize. But, we have said that if we, as Indigenous peoples, don't truly take advantage of these conjunctures, nothing will happen during the ten years, or twenty years even. I believe that the idea is that, for example, in regard to the Decade, we as organizations appropriate and seek change through the resolutions drafted by the UN.

We should fight in the framework of the United Nations and participate in forums with clear proposals. Many Indigenous people have traveled and participated, but often to provide a folkloric or cultural presence and not a politically active one. In the Ecuadorian case, we have a process of unification between Indigenous, peasant, and Afro-Ecuadorian organizations. There exists a national committee for the Decade wherein we are working with many proposals—concrete plans of action. We need to act, because many NGOs, and the church, are quite prepared to receive all of the resources filtering in for the International Decade. 🐸

organization for fifteen days of work, day and night. We managed to paralyze the entire country, block roads, and prevent the delivery of agricultural products to the city.

Now, in regards to the war, CONAIE held some reunions with the Shuar-Achuar Federation and the Achuar *compañeros*. But we have to consider that, on the one hand, there was a total support from the Ecuadorian people, including support from Indigenous peoples and *campesino* sector. For example, in my community there were 14 *compañeros* in the line of fire. So, the participation of almost all the people was a very important aspect.

But I reiterate that CONAIE, the Shuar-Achuar Federation, and other organizations met and came up with very important resolutions, demanding of the government retribution for all of the impacts, both environmental and cultural, resulting from the war. There were very large communities that were displaced. Nevertheless, as of yet there is no response from the government.

You said that the Shuar and Indigenous people in other regions supported the armed forces. That contradicts the statements of organi-

zations such as CONFENIAE and CONAIE, that said that the war wasn't of Indigenous people but of governments and that those border areas definitively belong to the Indigenous people living there. How would you clarify this?

It's that, yes, there was support from the people, but unfortunately societies in general are too impassioned by events like this, be it war, or soccer, to mention just a few. So the people rise and with their impassioned attitude begin to back a position imposed by the government, with nationalism and a false sense of partisanship.

We must take into consideration that CONAIE produced many press releases clarifying that, truly, it was not in our interest to support [the war], or even the government (and much less the armed forces), because in the end, the war was not one of Indigenous peoples. On top of this, in the borderlands there were closely related Indigenous groups that were clashing; people with the same historical roots, the same blood, and the same economic problems.

The important thing to remember is that in the development of the war, when the people were up in arms, supporting the government, it in turn was

The Survival and Revival of Native American Languages

The disappearance of Indigenous languages, although a deeply disturbing and ever accelerating trend, has received little national or international attention. Under enormous stress from a variety of sources, the Native people of this continent appear unable to halt the rapid erosion that is washing away a central strand of human identity. Not only are languages disappearing, but with them unique world-views and philosophies. The negative consequences of this loss of cultural, spiritual, and intellectual diversity will become more apparent as the spiritual and intellectual barrenness of the modern world more fully reveals itself.

*By Alexander Ewen and
Jeffrey Wollock*

The Problem

The study of Native languages, anthropological linguistics, was developed under the assumption that Indigenous languages were doomed. Its main task has been to record languages for posterity. This is important, but it is not enough. Today there is glowing resolve to put a brake on this process: the Indigenous cultures and their traditions are too important. For their survival, the languages must also continue. As a stuffed and mounted specimen can give little sense of the live animal it once was, so dry texts and even tapes are no substitute for living languages. These are not museum pieces, they are themselves living libraries, windows on worlds that cannot be replaced.

The loss of language diversity is a global trend. It has been estimated that, at current rates, the 5,500 currently living languages will be reduced in a century or two to just a few hundred.¹ American Indian languages have been especially hard hit. Indeed, of the world's languages that are considered nearly extinct, over one quarter are Indigenous languages in the United States.

At the time of Columbus, at least 300 Indigenous languages were being spoken in what is now the United

States.² Today there are only 148 and, of those, one third have fewer than 100 fluent speakers and are considered near extinction. More ominous, 32 native languages have 10 or fewer speakers and are in critical danger of becoming extinct within the next few years.³

The percentage of Native-language speakers in the various communities varies enormously. While over 350,000 Native people, or one in six, speak their language, almost three-fourths of these come from fewer than a dozen Native nations or groups of nations, and more than a third of the Indigenous-language speakers in this country are Navajo.

While Indigenous languages are threatened in other countries in the Americas, nowhere is the problem as critical as in the United States. More languages are on the verge of extinction in this country than in the rest of the Americas combined, and California alone has more threatened languages than any other country. Moreover, even those languages that are not immediately threatened with extinction are in danger. For example, although Yakima has 3,000 speakers, most or all of these are middle-aged or older.

Without a comprehensive program to educate young Yakimas, the language will soon suffer a massive loss of speakers as they begin to pass away.

It is estimated that 80% of all Canadian and United States Indian languages are in a similar process of dying out.⁴ Few national governments are doing anything effective to reverse these patterns. For example, the United States has a strong commitment to bilingual education, yet the manner in which it is taught is almost useless in preventing languages from disappearing.

There are many Indian communities that have successfully resisted the global trend. Some, such as the Hualapai and the Utes, have long had vigorous and effective language programs. Recent

More languages are on the verge of extinction in this country than in the rest of the Americas combined, and California alone has more threatened languages than any other country.

income from gaming and other new enterprises has made possible strong language revival programs among the Oneidas and Menominee of Wisconsin. In Canada, there is growing awareness of the seriousness of the issue and there have been strong commitments to language revitalization from national Native organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations.



Photo: Ila Hartman

A Navajo woman elder. The Navajo are one of the few Indigenous cultures in the United States that have retained their language to this day. More than one third of the Native language speakers in the US are Navajo.

All of this indicates two things: that there is a critical need to begin working with Native communities in the United States on intensive language teaching or revival; and that there are successful models of how to proceed. Many Indian communities require immediate action, in the form of specially designed programs, if their languages are to survive.

The inability of the modern mind to understand the wealth that surrounds it is every day making the world a poorer place. A report issued by the Worldwatch Institute in 1992 warned that the consequences of culture loss among tribal peoples would include the disappearance of millions of plant and animal species which currently live under their protection.⁵ One can only ponder the question: when the world is reduced to a single language, will there be anything of value left to say?

The Needs

All preliminary findings indicate that Native communities in the United States, Canada, and other parts of this hemisphere find the language retention issue to be one of their biggest concerns. The inability to pass on the language to the youth is making it more and more difficult to pass on traditions and culture, or even to foster the traditional leadership necessary to guide Indian communities into the future.

The general consensus among those who work with Native people on their issues is that the vast majority of Native communities would gladly organize or participate in language recovery projects if they had the option. When economic opportunities present themselves, Indian reservations usually begin a language revitalization program. Many communities, such as the Seneca and Onondaga, have fought

hard for bilingual education in public schools, only to find that it is inadequate to stem the loss of speakers.

Due to the lack of resources available to most Native communities, many of whom are struggling with a host of other problems, language programs are usually not an option. Most Indigenous people in this hemisphere have much lower standards of living than the surrounding populations and are often extremely poor. Many Native communities suffer political oppression, continual erosion of their land base, and the denial of their legal and cultural rights.⁶

Efforts to develop and provide an economic base to these Indian communities can have detrimental effects on languages and cultures.⁷ New economic development activities such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) can be expected to have a

negative effect on Indian languages in Mexico, where almost 30% of the population is Indigenous.⁸

Language revitalization is a comparatively new effort, with few successes and many failures. Programs are required that can take into account the specific political, cultural, and economic circumstances of Native communities.⁹ Even those Native people with economic resources often lack the many different skills needed to put forward a comprehensive program. Moreover, cultural change is now so rapid and pervasive, that new ways to hold the interest of young people and educate them need to be developed.

The lack of communication among Native communities has hindered the few successful models from being applied in other areas. In areas where language loss has reached a critical level, governments and institutions put the emphasis on recording languages rather than on rescuing them. Much more research needs to be done on this issue to better survey and evaluate the current state of language retention among North American Indians as well as to seek out successful solutions. 🐾

Adapted from Daybreak, Winter 1994

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Notes:

1. Diamond (1973) makes the estimate of global language loss, though he calculates the number of living languages at 6,000.

2. Teeter (1976) gives an estimate of 300 Native American languages at contact.

3. Grimes (1984) classifies 176 languages as nearly extinct, of which 49 are in the United States. In her survey, only Australia with 43 comes close to this number; there is no other country with more than 10 critically endangered languages. Because different researchers use different criteria for determining whether a language is endangered or nearly extinct, there is some discrepancy in the figures. The rule of thumb used in the present review is that a language with fewer than one hundred speakers, all elderly, can be considered near extinction.

4. Teeter (1976) estimates that half of all American Indian languages will become extinct along with this last generation of speakers. Diamond (1993) cites Michael Krauss of the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. "For the 187 Indian languages surviving in North America outside of Alaska... Krauss estimates that 149 of these are already moribund." Fettes (1993) states that 50 of the 53 Native languages spoken in Canada are "considered declining or endangered."

5. According to Briscoe (1992), "Up to 5,000 groups guard 12 percent of the earth's land area. They differ from the rest of humanity because they live closer to the soil and remain distinct from their countries' dominant culture." The report also found that Indigenous people pos-

sess unique knowledge of plants, medicines, etc. that could be valuable to mankind. It noted that "small language groups are disappearing at an unprecedented rate."

6. The quality of life among Indigenous people in this hemisphere varies widely, though on the whole it is not very good. Indian reservations in the United States, with the exception of those that have successful gaming operations, are still among the poorest regions in the country. Indians in the US suffer disproportionately from teen-age suicide (more than four times the national average), substance abuse, and other social ills. Canadian First Nation reserves have many of the same problems, as well as often being enmeshed in political and legal disputes with the Canadian government over land title and development policy. Amnesty International (1992) provides a glimpse of the difficulties faced by Indigenous people in this hemisphere, and particularly in Latin America. The latter generally live in extreme poverty, have few of the rights and services accorded Indians in the U.S. and Canada and are often the victims of political violence and oppression.

7. There are few studies that correlate development, reservation economies, or other factors with Indian language retention. A simple comparison of median incomes and poverty levels among Indian communities that have suffered severe language loss with those that have not gives a small indication that those reservations that are poorest may retain their languages better. More work is needed on this question.

8. With over 230 Indian languages, Mexico is the richest source of Native languages in the hemisphere. According to Taliman (1993) and DePalma (1993), NAFTA can be expected to rapidly accelerate the displacement of Indians from their lands and into the overcrowded Mexican cities. Unlike the United States, where only 2.4% of its population is now engaged in agriculture, in Mexico, 26% of the labor force is composed of farm workers, and the vast majority of these farmers are Indians. Since corn is the leading Mexican crop, the introduction of cheaper American corn is likely to lead to a loss of jobs, lands, and cultures for millions of Indians.

9. Reyhner (1993) examines the history of Indian language education in the U.S. — and its notable lack of success — in light of the new Native American Languages Act of 1990. Up until recently, Indian languages were either banned or discouraged in schools. The last few decades have seen a change of attitude, but little has been accomplished. In 1991, a report prepared by a United States Department of Education Task Force noted the continuing failure to stop Indian language and critical loss (Associated Press, 1991). The schools managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs are notorious for the poor quality of teachers and equipment, and the derelict condition of the schools themselves.

Indigenous Conferences Reject the Hidrovía Mega-project

"This project doesn't value the rivers, the streams, the forests, the fish, the birds, the Indigenous peoples, nor life. It only values the winnings of a few businessmen." - First Indigenous Encounter of the Paraguay River Basin

Indigenous peoples who stand to lose their homes and livelihood as the result of the Hidrovía industrial waterway project on the Paraguay-Paraná river system met in October of 1995 to discuss the project's impact on their traditional economies, and to agree on a plan of action against Hidrovía. Nivaclé, Ayoreo, Angaité, Guaná, Guaraní Nandeva, and Guaraní Occidental representatives from the Paraguay and Pilcomayo river basins met separately and came up with a detailed plan of action against a project which they say will spell disaster for the environment and the communities.

The Hidrovía project would require widening and deepening the channels of the Paraguay and Paraná, South America's second largest water system, to allow ocean-going ships access to the port of Cáceres, Brazil, 2,100 miles upstream from the river's mouth near Buenos Aires. Under the plan being studied, the rivers would be channeled, straightened, and dredged, with tributaries of the river blocked off and rock outcroppings in the channel detonated.

Indigenous peoples and environmentalists insist that Hidrovía, nicknamed "Hell's Highway," would devastate the river ecosystems, including the Pantanal wetland (the largest in the world), and by extension, the traditional economies of the Indigenous peoples which are based on fishing. In the meetings, Indigenous leaders protested that Hidrovía threatens to worsen the already precarious living standards of the people dependent on

the river basins and lead to the colonization of nearby lands. "Only 20 percent of Indigenous communities in Paraguay have legal titles to their land, and only a fraction of these are adequate for sustaining a traditional lifestyle," stresses the declaration of the Paraguay basin. "The [Indian] territories of the entire region will experience pressures even greater than those that exist presently due to speculation on the value of land and the establishment of ranching and agricultural industries. The result will be more forced evictions, starting with the riverine populations."

The Indigenous coalitions also stated that they were "extremely worried" at the lack of information and evasive nature of the governmental institutes carrying out the project. This concern was the impetus for the formation of the Ríos Vivos coalition, re-grouping 300 NGOs and Indigenous organizations worldwide. In December 1995, following 3 years of pressure to achieve public participation in the Hidrovía process, the Inter-Governmental Committee on Hidrovía (CIH), made up of the states of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay accepted a proposal from Ríos Vivos to provide



The Nivaclé people will be impacted by the Hidrovía project.

Photo: Glenn Switzer, IRI

access to all documents from the feasibility studies of Hidrovía. Nevertheless, CIH continues to state that construction will begin in the next few months. This has fueled doubts by Indigenous organizations and environmental groups that they will have a meaningful role in the decision-making process.

The resolutions of the Paraguay and Pilcomayo Indigenous encounters call for the unification of Indigenous peoples affected by Hidrovía and the joint preparation and publication of a diagnostic of the social and environmental conditions they face. As a counterexample to the official feasibility studies carried out by the governments, the diagnostic would directly involve the leaders of Indigenous communities. Important too is the translation and distribution of information on the

Hidrovía project in all the Indian languages spoken in area of impact. Lastly, they call for an intense and constant Indigenous presence in all of the local, regional, national, and international instances where decisions on Hidrovía are being made. 🐦

Information compiled from original documents and from World Rivers Review (December, 1996), the newsletter of the International Rivers Network (IRN). For more information, contact:

Coordinadora de Pueblos Indígenas de la Cuenca del Río Pilcomayo, C.C. 1380, Asunción-Paraguay; Tel: (595-21) 24-427; Fax: (595 21) 550-451; or IRN, 1847 Berkeley Way, Berkeley, CA 94703; Tel: (510) 848-1155; Fax: (510) 848-1008; Email: irn.org; WWW: <http://www.irn.org>.



Rio Paraguay-Paraná Watershed

“May We Dream of a Better Future?”

A Letter from Indigenous Peoples of the Pantanal to the International Development Bank

The following letter was sent by 180 Indigenous people of the world's largest wetlands, the Mato Grosso Pantanal, to the Inter-American Development Bank, regarding the Bank's support for studies for the Paraguay-Paraná Hidrovía industrial waterway, and for the Pantanal project, both of which will have environmental and cultural impacts on the region, and both of which are being designed and implemented without consultation with the traditional inhabitants of the region.

Aquidauana, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, January 27, 1996

We, the Guatos, Terena, Kaiowa, Bororo, Umotina, Pareci and Kinikináo are the traditional peoples that the Great Creator chose to live in and protect this region of the world. Throughout time, our ancestors taught us to live in harmony with the waters, birds, and plants, as a way of giving thanks and nurturing this gift for our well-being.

With the arrival of the white man came the roads and the railroad, and then came diseases and new customs which were unknown to us. This was the new civilization.

IDB is now financing a large-scale project under the pretext of developing the southern cone. We know that this project is part of a new re-organization of the world economy, which will truly attend only the ambitions of

unscrupulous businessmen, where egotism, nepotism, and political rivalries reign and only the fittest survive.

In this context of the decadence of “modernity,” we Indigenous peoples were never considered, and were instead only victimized.

We were never consulted, but we recommended that this type of ambition must be halted for the good of humanity. Their money must not disrespect and destroy the homes of our people and of the Great Creator.

Our role is to serve the memory of our people and of the Great Creator. Our role is to serve the memory of our ancestors and of our traditions and to defend the Pantanal, because only in this way can we go forward towards the future in search of a better life.

At the First Meetings of Indians of the Pantanal, the Indigenous voice asks: Why do they want to destroy the natural waterway? Who is going to benefit? Who is going to become rich with this? Up to what point is the IDB aware of the threat of destruction and impoverishment which the large-scale projects bring for our people.

We appeal to the Bank to be clear and transparent in its proposals, because our villages are worried. Will we be victims? Or may we dream of a better future?

For more information, contact: Rios Vivos Secretariat, Campo Grande, Brazil; tel: 55-67-724-3230; fax: 55-67-724-9109; email: ecoabrmspan@ax.apc.org

Biobío River: Chilean Government Renews Ralco Dam Concession

In the Spring 1995 issue of Abya Yala News we reported that ENDESA, the largest private company in Chile, is planning to construct six hydroelectric dams on the Biobío river in southern Chile. The first of these, Pangué, is already 70% completed. ENDESA now says it will move ahead with construction of the largest of the Biobío dam, called Ralco. Ralco threatens to displace 700 people, including 400 Pehuenche Indians. Since our last article, the struggle to save Biobío and the lands of the Pehuenche has been intense. Now, the Chilean state has broken down a barrier for the construction of Ralco.

On January 12, 1995, ENDESA announced that despite opposition by citizen groups and Indigenous people, members of the Chilean Congress, and even some government agencies, the office of the Inspector General of Chile had approved the renewal of ENDESA's provisional concession for surveying in the Ralco area of the Upper Biobío. The opposition to the renewal had caused the normally automatic renewal process to be delayed for nearly a year.

The groups opposed the renewal because of the negative impact of the surveying work on the ecology of the Upper Biobío and the Pehuenche Indigenous communities who live in the area. Ralco would be a 155 meter-high dam with a 3,400 hectare reservoir, which would flood over 70 km of the river valley and displace over 700 people, including 400 Pehuenche Indians. Environmental and Indigenous rights groups oppose the project not only because of the wide scale destruction it would cause, but also because projections of Chile's future energy requirements indicate that the energy it would produce will not be needed.

ENDESA has been continuously conducting surveying activities in the area, despite the fact that their original provisional concession expired in 1993, and their activities have consistently been carried out without the consent of the land owners. The opposition groups

hold that while Ralco's impacts have not been evaluated or approved by the appropriate government agencies, ENDESA should not be permitted to continue to bring destructive elements to the Ralco area.

Under Chilean Law (Law of Protection, Support, and Development of Indigenous People), the Pehuenche Indians are not required to leave their lands against their will nor to accept any relocation package offered by ENDESA. The Pehuenche have made clear their opposition to the Ralco project and the presence of ENDESA representatives in their territory, but the concession will enable ENDESA representatives to move through the Pehuenche Indians' territory against their wishes.

Opposition to the granting of the permit has been widespread. On January 19, a press conference was held to criticize the decision to renew the claim. A declaration was signed there by the major environmental groups and by youth organizations of the political parties in the governing coalition of Chile. Also, the Chilean Bureau of Indian Affairs (Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena- CONADI), recently created to implement Chile's new Indigenous Peoples Law, intervened against ENDESA.

The Pehuenche communities in the path of Endesa's project have had to contend with a well-orchestrated campaign of mis-information and bribery. Some

were misled by Endesa into selling their lands. Others have resisted actively, asking Endesa engineers to vacate their communities immediately: "Since it has not been possible to discuss things with ENDESA, and due to the assault that our Mapuche Pehuenche people are being subjected to, we feel forced to take the decision to ask them to leave Pehuenche territory, out of the communities of Quepuca-Ralco, Palmucho, Quepuca, Ralco-Lepoy, Lepoy, La Veta, Chenqueco..." (Werken (chiefs) of Quepuca-Ralco and Ralco Lepoy).

Write to the President Chile, Eduardo Frei and to the diplomatic representatives of Chile in your own country, asking them to respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Chile in accordance with the Chilean Indigenous Peoples Law and International Treaties:

Eduardo Frei, Presidente de la Republica de Chile; Fax: +56-2-690-4020 or +56-2-690-4329; <http://www.presidencia.cl/>; John Biehl, Chilean Ambassador to the United States; Fax: 202-887-5579

Compiled from Corrientes, newsletter of the Biobío Action Group (GABB), and Biobío updates (translated by IRN). For More information, contact: Grupo de Accion por el Biobío, Ernesto Pinto Lagarrigue 112, Recoleta, Santiago de Chile; Tel:+56-2-737-1420; Fax: +56-2-777-6414; email: gabb@huelen.reuna.cl

Cocaleras Take to La Paz!

A 350-mile March to Demand Human Rights in Bolivia

About five hundred Quechua-Aymara women organized a 350-mile march from the Chapare (a coca (*Erythroxylum coca*) producing area) to La Paz, Bolivia's capital. The women marchers entered the capital on January 18, 1996, thirty days after having left from the upper reaches of the Amazon basin. Their main purpose was to demand that the Bolivian government of President Sánchez de Lozada respect and enforce human rights in their home region, since abuses against the women and their families, also known as *cocaleros*, have increased recently. It was the first time organized Indigenous-peasant women from the coca areas marched to La Paz to discuss coca-related policies that affect them and their communities.

Coca: Spiritual, yet Demonized

Coca, the raw material for the production of cocaine, is a native crop to the area. It was first made illegal by the Vienna Convention of 1961. However, due to strong Indigenous resistance (coca holds ancient spiritual and cultural value for the Indigenous peoples who cultivate it), Bolivian officials agreed on a depenalized status. Ritual consumption and cultivation of coca has been allowed since that time by the Vienna Convention of 1988. However, due to the uncontrollable status of cocaine exports and consumption abroad, governments have demonized coca leaves, condemning the product and pressing for eradication. Surprisingly, here in the US, the well known writer William F. Buckley Jr. recently reactivated the debate over legalization of drugs in the journal *National Review*. The fact is that consumption of drugs in general, and not only of cocaine, has been steadily rising in the US and Europe. A possible answer, Buckley stresses, lies in legalization. (William F. Buckley Jr., "The War

on Drugs is Lost" *National Review*, Vol XLVIII No. 2, February 12, 1996: 34-48).

War on Drugs or People?

In the same way that the War on Drugs is perceived by policy makers as a failure, above all in the US, Indigenous peasants are not convinced by the long line of alternatives to coca cultivation. Chapare Indigenous peasants indirectly answer to foreign demand—the "consumption side," in the US and Europe, which is almost never discussed. From the point of view of states, coca harvests must be condemned as the main providers of raw material for cocaine processed outside their domains. The US embassy in La Paz has continually pressured the Bolivian government for complete eradication of coca fields. However, there has been a general failure to demonstrate the economic viability of alternative development projects, or alternative agriculture. *Cocaleros* are trapped in a never-ending profit cycle based on coca harvests that continue to guarantee their income, and thus their survival.

As part of the march, the *cocaleras* clearly addressed the fact that criminalization of coca has spelled disaster for the Indigenous peasants of Chapare. The state militarized the area, which they denounced as a violation of their human rights. In addition, the women marchers demanded the cessation of eradication of coca fields, compensation for Indigenous peasants who were killed or have been physically disabled due to police brutality in the area, government support for initiatives seeking viable alternative development, legal protection for union leaders who represent Indigenous peasants in the coca areas, the decriminalization and commercialization of coca leaf nationally and internationally, and government accountability for agreements signed in 1994

regarding the implementation of alternative development projects in the area.

The Women's *Cocalera* March received massive support from the public. Aymara leader Cristina Márquez, who represented the COB (Bolivian Workers Union) during the march, said the "women are clearly struggling against the neoliberal model" led by President Sanchez. Ximena Iturralde and Lidia Katari, first Lady and vice President Cárdenas' wife, respectively, agreed to analyze the demands of the *cocaleras* in order to better understand their situation.

UMOPAR: Spreading Terror in the Coca Regions

A sharp condemnation of UMOPAR, a specialized anti-drug armed unit, was voiced by Quechua leader Silvia Lazarte. "For us [*cocaleras*] there is no life, justice, peace nor tranquillity in the coca fields...we continue to suffer systematic abuses. We want you to think about this," she stated. This coincides with a recent *Human Rights Watch Americas* report which analyzes the human impacts of the War on Drugs: "The resources possessed by Bolivian antinarcotics forces are too few: too few men too poorly equipped are being asked, on the one hand, to battle well-entrenched drug traffickers funded by immense profits. On the other hand, they are being asked to control the thousands of poor people who labor at the lowest end of the drug production pyramid... This law enforcement effort, moreover, is conducted in the absence of institutions and traditions that hold public agents accountable for their own adherence to laws protecting civilians from abuse." (July 1995, Vol. 7, No. 8, page 38). 📌

(Compiled with information from the Bolivian National Newspaper, *Presencia*)

Nimia Apaza, Kolla Lawyer Challenges Argentinean Health Minister

Nimia Apaza, an Indigenous Kolla lawyer in northern Argentina (General Coordinator and Lawyer for the Jujuy Native Council of Organizations), challenged Argentine social welfare minister Herminio Gómez regarding his explanation of infant mortality in the Susques Province. "Infant mortality is not a cultural problem," she asserts, "it is not true that mothers do not care for their children and that they let them die." For Apaza, it is "the clash of cultures that is killing our people; Western culture comes overwhelmingly, bringing so called 'superior and better ideas' than our traditional culture..."

How does Minister Gómez think that infant mortality rates in Susques, during the first months of 1995, are linked to the fact that mothers do not take their children to the health centers?

He presented an isolated case, possibly due to special circumstances. In fact, the academic calendar in Susques, which was once from summer until May, was changed from March to December. The previous calendar had a logic: in May, grazing cycles change, and therefore animals need to be taken farther away to find fodder. Mothers that do not have older children are forced to take younger children along. If they do not take their animals to graze, not only will one child die, but the entire family will suffer because they will not have food for the next year.

How then do you explain the growth of infant mortality rates?

It is the clash of cultures that is killing our people. When I speak about cultures, I assume that there is not one superior culture, nor that ours is inferior. The concept that our traditions and customs are backward has made this clash and invasion the cause of malnutrition and infant mortality.

How has Western culture affected Susques?

The people of the city don't understand that our people live 'within' nature and that no one is superior. Mankind is not the king of creation; we are all part of it. When nature is destroyed it pro-

duces a great imbalance. Susques, indeed, is the salt plateau of Jujuy. This is to say that it has little potable water and its vegetation is basically a small perennial bush called *Tola* (*Baccharis Tola*). *Tola* protects the topsoil against strong winds and reproduces with little rainfall, which once created a stable source of graze for llamas. The problem is that today, soil erosion has decreased the amount of *Tola* in the area.

Ecological collapse has caused desertification of the highlands. *Tola* has been used as a fuel in the school kitchen furnaces because there is no money available for other forms of fuel. Horacio Mercado, an agronomist, warned us about the ecological consequences, but was not heard by the local authorities. The truth is that our people traditionally harvest *Tola* for domestic use, but only take what's needed, avoiding the disruption of the natural equilibrium.

Can you describe for us the traditional diet in Susques?

Our diet traditionally depended on corn-based meals, such as: *Chilcan* (breakfast), *ulpada*, *tostadas* (snacks), *kalapurca*, *kalapi*, *tulpo*, *caldo*, *majao*, and *picantes* (lunches), *anchi* (desert), and *chicha* (corn beer). To this basic diet we added *quinua*, *java* beans, and potatoes, supplemented occasionally with *chalona* (llama meat).

Can you explain the traditional economic patterns of exchange in this area?

Our people obtained corn through inter-communal bartering systems.

Burros (mules) were used to transport salt to the lower valleys to trade for corn. Nowadays, burros are considered dangerous on the highways. The police forbid them on the roads, so there is no bartering, nor corn. On the other hand, there are less grazing areas and beasts of burden are dying. People are aware of this problem and they are trying to save the llama and sheep instead of eating them to survive.

Before, families used to own large herds of animals and now they have less than fifteen or twenty heads. In a strategic drama of survival, our people learned to live under-nourished. Under these strenuous circumstances, the most affected are the children who cannot withstand high altitude weather and suffer from bronchitis, pneumonia, and whooping cough.

How has the school system devalued the traditions of your people?

Teachers with good intentions teach our children to eat everything available, but because of the general devaluation of our culture, it is understood that corn-based foods belong to poor people. So when children return home, they no longer want to eat traditional foods, and parents do not have the means to purchase processed foods. For example, noodles are available, but contain little nutritional value. The superior value put on processed food is what is causing the malnutrition of our people.

(Excerpts of an interview by Mariana Carbajal, with permission from weekly El Patriota, La Paz Nov 11-17, 1995)

Ñamandú:

A Guaraní Community Pays a Heavy Price for a National Park in Misiones, Argentina

On the 10th of October, 1995, soon after mid-day, a group of uniformed, armed men from the Body of Park Wardens of the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Government of Misiones entered the Mby'á Guaraní community of Ñamandú-Arroyo Azul and destroyed its dwellings and nearby fields. The motive for the attack remains unknown, but it is widely believed that it was due to the political interests associated with the creation of the Provincial Park of Cuñá Pirú, and the broader governmental plans to bring tourism to the area.

The area of Ñamandú is located in the eastern end of the valley of Cuñá Pirú, in the center of the province of Misiones of northeastern Argentina. It is covered with virgin rainforest and is one of the last undeveloped areas of the Paraná-Misiones Forest. It is also sacred to the eleven Mby'á Guaraní communities that live there. The three communities of Ñamandú (Arroyo Azul, Ñamandú and Tamandú-í) are considered the guardians of the sacred area.

Only four women, the children, and the elderly were present in the village when the uniformed men arrived saying that, in the name of the government, they had to withdraw from the provincial park immediately. The women responded in Guaraní Mby'á that they would wait until the men returned. When the women refused to accompany them out of the park, the officials broke into the dwellings, threw out all of the belongings, and destroyed all of the dwellings in the community, including the "House of Prayer" (*Opy*). Then they destroyed the community's

fields—all of which were ready for harvest. Soon the men returned from the forest with food and found their community completely destroyed. They quickly sought refuge in nearby villages.

On the 12th of October, with the help of other chiefs, the members of Ñamandú-Arroyo Azul wrote a letter to Lorenzo Ramos, leader of the Counsel of Caciques (chiefs) of the Guaraní People. They stated that, "We are 13 aboriginal families that, for a long time, have lived on this forest. Eight of our families have been evicted; forty people, old and young... Today we are thrown out into the streets and we sleep in the forest and don't have anything to eat. The children are getting sick and us poor mothers and fathers, we don't know what to do with them because we

"This in an incident that does not deserve all the expensive 'hoopla' that has been made over it," -Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources

abandoned our houses and the fields of manioc and wheat. We are suffering... We do not know what will happen... We do not know why we were evicted."

Although the Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources did not accept the responsibility for the events of Ñamandú and stated, "This in an incident that does not deserve all the expensive 'hoopla' that has been made over it," in November a court case ensued during which an "apology" was issued. The Counsel of Caciques of the Guaraní People continue to pressure the local and national governments and

are demanding that a Community Indigenous Territory in the name of the Guaraní be created out of the Provincial Park, Ku Pirú, that would be part of the Natural Cultural Reserve. ♡

Please show your support for the Guaraní people by writing letters demanding:

- that the government repair the damages they have incurred and that the wardens be made legally responsible in a court of law;

- support of the request of the Guaraní communities of Ku Pirú that their land be demarcated in a Community Indigenous Territory of 12,000 hectares;

- the re-establishment of Law 2435 that recognizes the Guaraní People, and their political, social, economic, and cultural systems, and grants them relative autonomy;

Sr. Gobernador de la Provincia de Misiones, Don Federico Ramón Puerta, Casa del Gobierno, 3300 Posadas, Argentina; Tel: 54-752-34483

Sr. Presidente de la Nación, Dr. Carlos S. Menem, Casa de Gobierno, Balcarce 50, 1000 Buenos Aires; Argentina; Fax: 54-1-331-6376; Tel: 54-1-343-3051

Sr. Presidente de la Cámara de Diputados de Misiones, Don Hector Caballero, Palacio Legislativo, Ivanoswky 1950, 3300 Posadas, Argentina; Fax: 54-752-39193

For more information contact the Centro Mocovi "Ialek Lav'a," Casilla de Correo 36, 2728 Melincué (Prov. de Santa Fé), Argentina; Tel: (54) 0465-99015; Fax: (54) 0465-99197.

Forging Unity, Zapatistas Call for Indigenous Forum

With more than 300 delegates, 250 guests, and international observers and reporters, the National Indigenous Forum took place on January 3-9, 1996, in San Cristóbal de las Casas, in an area called the Valley of Jovel. The event was called by the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), the Commission for Pacification (COCOPA), and the Plural Indigenous Assembly for Autonomous Regions (ANIPA). Twenty four Zapatista commanders, four of them women, participated in the Forum by chairing the Working Commissions.

The organizational frame of the Forum revolved around the objectives of the controversial "Peace with Dignity and Justice" negotiations between the government of President Ernesto Zedillo and the EZLN occurring in San Andrés Larráinzar, Chiapas. There the parties reached agreements on the first theme of Indigenous Culture and Rights on January 18.

Previous to the Forum, the EZLN consulted with its more than one hundred advisers out of which 40 are Indigenous people. The Forum was divided into six Working Commissions:

1. Community and Autonomy, Indigenous Rights
2. Indigenous Culture
3. Indigenous Education
4. Condition, Rights, and Culture of Indigenous Women
5. Indigenous Peoples and Mediums of Communication
6. Political Representation and Participation of Indigenous Peoples

It was the first time that the Zapatistas met with Indigenous representatives from most of the 57 Indigenous nations in Mexico, numbering today approximately 14 million. In the Resolutions, most of the delegates expressed strong support for Autonomous Indigenous Regions as well as the need to have a permanent forum to discuss Indigenous issues.

Another resolution that came out of the Forum was to demand that the government and congress reinstate article 27 of the Constitution in order to ensure that communal lands won't be sold to outsiders. Also, the Forum proposed to change several other articles of the Constitution with aim to create a plurinational state adapted to the many pueblos that live in Mexico today.

Margarita Gutiérrez, Nānahu from the state of Hidalgo and one of the coordinators of ANIPA, spoke positively of the event. "This is a great Forum because it has united grassroots Indigenous Representatives, and engaging in dialogue with the EZLN commanders helps to have an understanding of the cultures and problems we are facing. Also, the fact that in the EZLN women have full participation is very positive. We have to make an internal revolution first which is to allow women to participate fully in all decision-making processes." ❖

Peace Accord Signed by EZLN and Mexican Government

The EZLN and the Mexican state agreed on a preliminary peace agreement on February 16th in the Chiapas town of San Andrés Larráinzar. It was agreed that Indigenous rights must be stated in the constitution; that Indigenous political participation and representation be widely broadened; that justice be guaranteed to Indigenous peoples; that Indigenous cultural expression be supported; and that Indigenous peoples receive support for the creation of their own educational systems.

The peace agreement comes after the roundtable of negotiation from January 10-18 in San Andrés Sacamch'en de los Pobres, where the two factions agreed to re-define the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples, or establish principles and components for the construction of a "new social contract," in which Indigenous peoples participate as full members of society, all within the context of a "profound reform of the state."

By far the most significant advance of the negotiations are the modifications to the Mexican constitution, namely the recognition of Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination and autonomy. This comes after an initial stance of complete rejection of the even the mention of the word "self-determination." However, due to political pressures, the need to re-establish Mexico's image of stability as seen from abroad, and a negotiated definition of the nature of autonomy, the government conceded.

What is the nature of the "Autonomy" granted to Indigenous peoples after this initial round of agreements? Autonomy was declared at the "communal" level, which is a far cry from the Indigenous vision of distinct and proper territorial, juridical, and political entities. This point will no-doubt be contested in negotiating sessions to come.

OAS Drafts Inter-American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Recently, the Organization of American States (OAS) distributed a rough draft of a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. On February 27-28, 1996, the IACHR (see below) of the OAS organized a reunion in Guatemala in which Indigenous leaders critiqued the declaration. The initial May deadline for receiving the input of Indigenous people has been indefinitely postponed, so there is time to unify Indigenous voices into one to modify the Declaration. For this, Indigenous peoples must come together in inter-regional meetings. SAIIIC encourages the OAS to go further, as the Draft Declaration falls short of meeting the aspirations of Indigenous peoples for their collective rights. Despite addressing key problems faced by Indian communities, the paternalistic dominance of national ideology pervades the document, leaving Indigenous peoples in a subaltern position of entities somehow "protected" by nation-states. In what follows, we present excerpts from the Draft Declaration.

The present draft has been approved by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) of the OAS for consultation about its text with Governments, indigenous organizations, other interested institutions and experts. On the basis of their answers and comments, the IACHR will prepare its final proposal to be presented to the General Assembly of the OAS.

Section One. 'Indigenous Peoples'

Art. 1. Definition.

3. The use of the term "peoples" in this Instrument shall not be construed as having any implication with respect to any other rights that might be attached to that term in international law.

Section Two.' Human Rights'

Art. II. Full observance of human rights

3. The States also recognize that the indigenous peoples are entitled to collective rights insofar as they are indispensable to the enjoyment of the individual human rights of their members. Accordingly they recognize the right of the indigenous peoples to collective action, to their cultures, to profess and practice their spiritual beliefs and to use their languages.

Art. V. No forced assimilation.

The States shall not take any action which forces indigenous peoples to assimilate and shall not endorse any theory, or engage in any practice, that imports discrimination, destruction of a culture or the possibility of the extermination of any ethnic group.

Section Three. Cultural Development

Art. XVI. Indigenous Law.

1. Indigenous law is an integral part of the States' legal system and of the framework in which their social and economic development takes place.

2. Indigenous peoples are entitled to maintain and reinforce their indigenous legal systems and also to apply them to matters within their communities, including systems pertain-

ing to ownership of real property and natural resources, resolution of conflicts within and between indigenous communities, crime prevention and law enforcement, and maintenance of internal peace and harmony.

Section Five. Social, Economic, and Property Rights

5. In the event that ownership of the minerals or resources of the subsoil pertains to the State or that the State has rights over other resources on the lands, the governments must establish or maintain procedures for the participation of the peoples concerned in determining whether the interests of these people would be adversely affected and to what extent, before undertaking or authorizing any program for tapping or exploiting existing resources on their lands. The peoples concerned shall participate in the benefits of such activities, and shall receive compensation in accordance with international law, for any damages which they may sustain as a result of such activities.

Art. XX. Intellectual property rights.

1. Indigenous peoples shall be entitled to recognition of the full ownership, control and protection of such intellectual property rights as they have in their cultural and artistic heritage, as well as special measures to ensure for them legal status and institutional capacity to develop, use, share, market and bequeath, that heritage on to future generations.

2. Where circumstances so warrant, indigenous peoples have the right to special measures to control, develop and protect, and full compensation for the use of their sciences and technologies, including their human and genetic resources in general, seeds, medicine, knowledge of plant and animal life, original designs and procedures.

Section Six. General Provisions

Art. XXIV.

Nothing in this instrument shall be construed as granting any rights to ignore boundaries between States.

September 19, 1995.



ABYA YALA NEWS BACK ISSUES!

(Back issues are available in both Spanish and English for \$3 each plus shipping. Before 1993, the journal was called **SAIIC Newsletter**.)

State Frontiers and Indian Nations

Vol. 9 No.1, Spring 1995;
Includes:

- Ecuador-Peru Border War
- Interview Leonardo Viteri
- Mexico's Domestic and International Borders

Confronting Biocolonialism

Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter 1994;
Includes:

- The Human Genome Diversity Project
- Safeguarding Indigenous Knowledge
- The Guaymi Patent
- Biodiversity and Community Integrity

Indian Movements and The Electoral Process

Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 1994; Includes:

- Mexico: Indigenous Suffrage Under Protest
- Bolivia: Reconstructing the Ayllu
- Guatemala: Maya Political Crossroads
- Colombia: Special Indian Districting

Chiapas: Indigenous Uprising with Campesino Demands?

Vol. 8, Nos. 1 & 2, Summer 1994;
Includes:

- Maya Identity and the Zapatista Uprising
- Chronology of Events
- Indigenous and Campesino Peace Proposals
- Interview with Antonio Hernandez Cruz of CIOAC

II Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples

Vol. 7, Nos. 3 & 4, Winter 1993
(not available in Spanish);

Also includes:

- Oil Companies Take Over the Ecuadorian Amazon
- Free Trade's Assault on Indigenous Rights

1993 Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Vol. 7, Nos. 1 & 2, Winter/Spring 1993; Includes:

- UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights
- Statement of Indigenous Nations at the UN

Exclusive Interviews with Four Indian Leaders

Vol. 6, No. 4, Fall 1992; Interviews:

- Miqueas Millares, AIDSESP (Peru)
- Mateo Chumira, Guarani (Bolivia)
- Margarito Ruiz, FIPI (Mexico)
- Calixta Gabriel, Kaqchikel Maya (Guatemala)

March on Quito: Amazon Indians Demand to be Heard

Vol. 6, No. 3, Spring & Summer 1992 (not available in Spanish)

Also includes:

- Interview with President of ONIC (Colombia)
- CONIC Meeting in Kuna Yala (Panama)

News from Around the Continent

Vol. 6, Nos. 1 & 2, Spring & Summer 1991; Includes:

- Pehuenche Organizing Pays Off (Chile)
- South and Central American Women's Gathering (Peru)

Continued from page 21

What has been the response of people in the cities of Brazil? Are they aware of the situation?

I think that there is some activity. There is talk of organizing a protest in Brasilia. When there is money to bring 300-400 Indians to Brasilia, there is always little time to plan.

What is the situation regarding the construction of the government dam on the Cotingo River?

The construction of the dam was suspended, and electricity will be brought in from Venezuela instead. But, we don't know what will happen later on.

Is the border area heavily militarized?

The military is in Normandia and B-8. They want to build a town, and they keep coming through the area, helping the ranchers, burning an Indian home here and there.

How about in Indigenous areas?

Calha Norte included a base within Raposa/Serra do Sol, but they don't have money to build it yet. The military has declared itself against demarcation of Indian lands, and supports local interests. They built a blockade on the only road that links the cities with the malocas, and asserted the right to search entering Indians to intimidate them.

Are Indian lands subject to organized invasions by large companies, or small landless farmers and miners?

The larger economic interests have plans to get into the area. They want to get the miners out, so they can come in. But, we don't want anyone to come in. ☹

Send faxes to President Fernando Henrique Cardoso asking him to guarantee the demarcation of Indigenous areas in Brazil, and to revoke Decree 1775:

Fernando Henrique Cardoso, President of the Republic, Palácio do Planalto, Brasilia - DF - 70.160-900, Fax: 55-61-226-7566, email: pr@cr-df.rnp.br

URACCAN Offers Degree in Indigenous Rights

"For more than five centuries others have spoken for us. Today we want to begin to speak with our own voices on this October 12, when we commemorate once more the history of resistance of Indigenous peoples of the American Continent and as we launch a Degree Course in Indigenous Rights in our own university"— **URACCAN, the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua**

With that invocation to the more than 500 years of Indigenous resistance on the American Continent, Dr. Mirna Cunningham, Rector of the new university URACCAN, began her address inaugurating a degree course in Indigenous Rights—a speech that showed that this new post-secondary educational institution in Nicaragua is dedicated to take the forefront of the struggle to defend and extend the rights of the Caribbean Coast peoples. Above all, URACCAN will be innovative and open to serve the real needs of the Caribbean Coast mosaic of minority peoples—Miskito, Sumu, Rama, Garifuna, Blacks—who have been historically marginalized and oppressed by the Nicaraguan state. It will also reinforce the autonomous status of the Caribbean Coast area of Nicaragua by forming local experts in the fields of natural resource management who can prevent the exploitation of coastal resources by outside forces.

The degree course in Indigenous Rights, inaugurated in Bilwi (Puerto Cabezas), capital of the RAAN (North Atlantic Autonomous Region), is supported and financed by a coalition composed of the internal budget of URACCAN, the Nicaraguan state, and International NGOs. It is a Bachelor level diploma that will be recognized as a basis to enter Master or Doctoral level degree courses in Nicaragua. The URACCAN Department supervising this course is headed by Yuri Zapata; courses will be taught by Dr. Hazel Lau, a well known Miskito leader and lawyer.

"We are merely demanding," Cunningham asserted, "a fundamental

right for Indigenous peoples and ethnic communities of the Caribbean Coast...our systematic and effective participation in the development of our own educational program." The national educational system and national universities, she says, have "no roots in our culture and thus [cannot] respond to the urgent problems of our communities."

Mirna Cunningham is well known as a continental Indigenous leader. In 1992 she presided the work of convoking and assembling the Third Continental Encounter of Indigenous, Black, and Grassroots Resistance, held in Managua. She is a member of the Nicaraguan Parliament representing the Puerto Cabezas (Bilwi) region. She is also one of the principal architects of the autonomy process that led the Sandinista government in 1987 to enact the Autonomy Law, a Constitutional provision that recognized autonomous status for the north and south Caribbean Coast regions.

Indigenous peoples on the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast face severe marginalization. Unemployment in the RAAN is now around 90%, and for the RAAS (South Atlantic Autonomous Region) it is 70%. The Atlantic Coast area has the highest levels of mortality for early maternity. Three out of every four unemployed persons are women, and there is an increase in rape and abuse brought about by social decomposition and drug consumption.

Francisco Cambell, who recently travelled to the US in search of further support for the program, spoke eloquently of URACCAN's historical place

in the lives of the Black and Indigenous peoples of the coast. "The Autonomy Process was the greatest historical shift from the liberal, nationalist ideology that to be Mestizo and Catholic is the only legitimate form of belonging and identity. Now, the peoples of the region say, 'We will build our university.'"

The establishment of an Indigenous Rights curriculum will further the autonomy process in the Atlantic Coast region by giving local peoples the educational training necessary to build the juridical framework for the reclaiming of the native economy and political system. In addition, the program will do this in a way that respects the various cultural expressions present on the Caribbean coast: "unity in diversity," which must also integrate the cosmopolitanism of the Black Caribbean community. It will also decentralize the whole process of education, taking students into coastal communities for workshops, seminars, and open-ended, participatory sessions. The course, however, is offered only on the Bilwi campus, which will favor Miskitos over Sumus because of its location. Hence the need to open another program in the Bonanza region to the benefit of the Sumu communities. ♡

Adapted from a text by Felipe Stuart Courneyeur

For information about URACCAN contact:

URACCAN, Edificio El Carmen del Canal 4 1/2c. al sur, Managua, Nicaragua; Tel: 505-2-682-143; Fax: 505-2-682-145; or fstuart@uugate.uni.rain.ni; Fax: 505-2-682145

Cultural Survival Canada:

Research, Education, and Advocacy in Biocolonial Times

Around the world, Indigenous peoples are the caretakers of sacred knowledge about the unity of all living things and life processes, from genes, microorganisms and species, to human societies and the ecosystems in which we live. These gifts of the Creator have enabled our peoples to survive five centuries of colonialism and to continue to nurture an extraordinary diversity and richness of life, even within our much diminished land base. Our sacred relationship with Mother Earth is also vital for humanity as a whole as the world seeks ways to rebalance human needs with respect for the environment.

Today, however, the gifts of the Creator are under siege by corporations and governments attempting to make life itself another form of private property. This new wave of colonialism seeks to open one "last frontier" for economic globalization: the expropriation of our knowledge and the privatization of sacred plants, animals and our own genes.

Cultural Survival Canada (CSC) is an autonomous charitable organization supporting Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination and territorial integrity. In the face of this new wave of colonialism, we are engaged in research, public education and advocacy around issues of biotechnology, intellectual property rights, and other aspects of the international trade in genes and Indigenous knowledge. CS Canada also supports advocacy and capacity-building initiatives aimed at strengthening Indigenous peoples' ability to intervene in international fora where policies on biocolonialism are being shaped.

Biodiversity and Human Rights

CSC is working closely with Indigenous peoples' organizations around the Fourth International Technical Conference on Plant Genetic Resources of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Liepzig, Germany, June 1996), the FAO's Food Security Summit (November 1996, Rome), UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee and, critically, the next meeting of the signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (November 1996, Buenos Aires).

The CBD is a binding intergovernmental agreement ratified by 138 states, including the majority of states in South and Meso America. While the Convention does include some recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples over our knowledge and innovations, private and public interests in the North are clearly poised to use the Convention as a framework for expanded privatization of plants, ani-

mals, and genetic material from biodiversity rich regions, and of the associated knowledge-systems of Indigenous peoples. Whether the Convention becomes a mechanism for protecting Indigenous peoples' rights or a tool for entrenching biocolonialism will depend to a large extent on the negotiations set to begin in November in Buenos Aires where the Conference of the Parties to the CBD finally has Indigenous peoples' rights on agenda.

For more information, please contact:

Cultural Survival Canada, International Coordinating Office,
Indigenous Peoples' Biodiversity Network (IPBN) 304-200 Isabella
Street, Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1S 1V7. Phone: 613-237-5361;
Fax: 613-237-1547; Email: csc@web.apc.org

**BUFFALO
COMMONS**

New from Cultural Survival Canada,
an international indigenous peoples' magazine
on biological diversity and self-determination.
Buffalo Commons debuts June 1996 with
Biocolonialism: Globalization, Genes & Genocide.
Write to CS Canada, 304-200 Isabella Street,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1S 5J1.
Email: csc@web.apc.org. Phone: 613.237.5361.



News from SAIIC...

Since our last journal in November of 1995, SAIIC passed through a difficult period, which has slowed the publication of *Abya Yala News*. We apologize to our readers for this inconvenience. In spite of many difficulties, our work with Indigenous peoples has continued on stronger than ever. We had numerous visitors, worked on many different campaigns, and stayed long hours to do it all.

We are very pleased to announce that **Amalia Dixon** is now Director of SAIIC. Amalia's experiences as a Miskita woman in the autonomous Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua have prepared her well for the rigors of the SAIIC directorship. It is a pleasure to work with her.

SAIIC is pleased to announce that **Mariana Chuquin**, a Quichua woman from Ecuador has joined us as member of the board of directors. Mariana is from the community of Mariano Acosta in the province of Imbabura. Mariana attended the Universidad del Norte in Ecuador as a single mother. She moved to the US in 1984, and now works in Social Services for the community of San Francisco's Tenderloin district, providing health, food, free shelter, clothing, counseling, and information resources. She has remained active in the Indigenous Movement through it all. Welcome, Mariana.

Laura Soriano Morales, a Mixtec-Zapotec woman from Oaxaca, Mexico, has joined SAIIC to coordinate and produce SAIIC's radio program. Laura is part of the Binational Oaxacan Indigenous Front, and has a long his-

tory of working in the Indigenous movement. Up to this point, we have taped a program on Biodiversity and Biopiracy for the purposes of informing Indigenous peoples of this new form of colonialism. The radio program also consists of a segment of news entitled "Indigenous Voices." Radio programs are taped and distributed to over seventy different Indigenous radio stations and organizations in Latin America.

SAIIC welcomes **David Rothschild** as the new Administration and Project Coordinator. David graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz, with a Major in Latin American Studies. David has worked with various Indigenous organizations in Ecuador including CONAIE. He is presently working on a book focusing on Biodiversity and Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights, to be published in English and Spanish.

In late October, we received the visit of **José Jacir de Souza**, long-time Macuxi activist in Brazil. Jacir extended his speaking tour from the East Coast to the West, and had great success here in the Bay Area. We had the privilege of conducting an interview with him with the help of Leda Martins and Glenn Switkes.

Between November and January, **Gilton Mendes**, an intern from Brazil, worked with SAIIC in developing closer solidarity ties with Indigenous organizations in the Brazilian Amazon. Gilton compiled key information on the changes in the Brazilian Indian land legal structures and also networked with and presented his work

to area activists. It was a pleasure having Gilton here working with us.

SAIIC also received the visit of a **Sami delegation** (the Sami people are indigenous to what is today Norway, Finland, Sweden, and parts of northern Russia). During their visit, we exchanged common experiences of fighting for territorial rights, issues of representation, and the struggle to preserve and manage the earth's natural resources. We thank them for coming to see us.

Lastly, we were lucky enough to receive the visit of **Francisco Campbell**, who is Vice-President of URACCAN, the University of the Autonomous Region of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Francisco talked to SAIIC about this brand new initiative to provide Indigenous education and training to the Sumu, Miskito, Rama, and Garifuna peoples in Nicaragua.

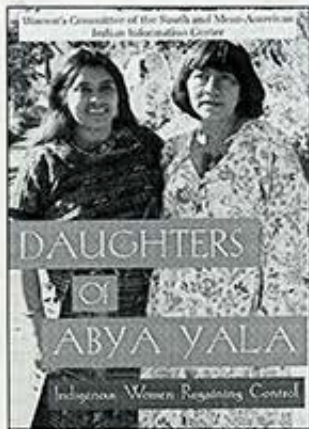
Several people have left SAIIC since our last journal: **Leticia Valdez**, **Andrew Bartlett**, **Marc Becker**, and **Cheryl Musch**. We take this opportunity to thank them for their warm dedication to SAIIC and wish them the best in all their future endeavors.

Coming up in the next issue of

**Cultural
Extinction in
the Americas**

ABYA YALA NEWS

ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM SAIIC



Daughters of Abya Yala

Testimonies of Indian women organizing throughout the Continent. Statements from grassroots Indian women leaders from South and Meso America. Includes resolutions from Indigenous women's meetings, a directory of Indian women's organizations and

key contacts, information on Indian women's projects, and poems by Indian women. Contains 128 pages with beautiful black and white photographs. Printed on recycled paper. \$8 + \$3.00 shipping.

Video: A Skirt Full of Butterflies

15 minutes. A love poem to the Isthmus Zapotec women of southern Oaxaca, Mexico, by filmmakers Ellen Osborne and Maureen Gosling. For every purchase made, a second copy will be sent to an Indigenous women's organization as a gift. \$19.95 + \$3.00 shipping.

Video: Columbus Didn't Discover Us

Native people's perspectives on the Columbus Quincentennial based on the footage of the 1990 Quito Conference. 24 minutes. A co-production of SAIIC, CONAIE, ONIC and Turning Tide Productions. Available in Spanish or English. \$19.95 + \$3.00 shipping.

Amazonia: Voices from the Rainforest

A resource and action guide with a comprehensive listing of international rainforest and Amazonian Indian organizations sponsored by SAIIC and the International Rivers Network, and published by Rainforest Action Network and Amazonia Film Project, 1990. Available in Spanish or English for \$4.50 + \$3.00 shipping.

1992 International Directory & Resource Guide

An annotated directory of over 600 international organizations that participated in 500 Years of Resistance projects. Includes declarations from Indigenous conferences and organizations and information on curriculum resources, speakers bureaus, computer networks, audio-visual resources and print resources. \$5.00 + \$3.00 shipping.

"Indigenous Voices" Radio Program

SAIIC's latest taped radio program is now available. Focusing on topics related to biodiversity and Indigenous peoples, it serves as an informative base with which Indigenous peoples can protect themselves against unwelcome bioprospecting and biopiracy. 1 hour. Narrated by members of SAIIC's Board of Directors. (Available in Spanish only) \$8.00 + \$3.00 shipping.

**South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC)
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