



NEWSLETTER

South American Indian Information Center (SAIIC)

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Sample Copy

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Thank you for your interest and support! We appreciate your correspondence. We also welcome those who are reading the SAIIC Newsletter for the first time. As you will see, our goal is to facilitate the exchange of information among Indians and others interested in Indian issues in South, Central, and North America by providing summaries in English of news we receive from the non-English speaking areas of the Americas. As an all-volunteer organization, we are very aware of the need for collaborative effort. For those who wish to make a tax deductible donation to SAIIC (made out to the American Friends Service Committee), your contribution will be greatly appreciated and will go to further SAIIC projects, including our newsletter, radio program, and occasional publications. We are currently raising funds to sponsor the visit of Sofia Painqueo, a traditional singer and active participant in AD-Mapu in Chile. Also, we urge those who haven't subscribed yet to the newsletter to do so.

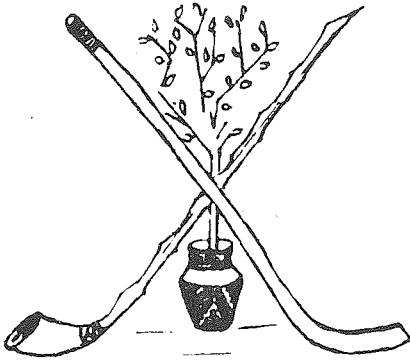
Sincerely,
The SAIIC Committee

ARGENTINA

Nilo Cayuqueo, Coordinator of SAIIC, has just returned from a trip to South America, where he intended to visit Indian communities in Argentina and Chile. Due to an unexpected wait in Argentina to renew his passport, the latter part of the trip had to be canceled. Following is his report on Argentina.

In Argentina, which together with Chile forms the southern part of the American continent, there are 13 different Indian nations which include





approximately 700,000 of the 28 million people who live in Argentina. The largest nations are the Kolla (approximately 250,000), living in Jujuy and Salta provinces by the Bolivian border; the Tobas (approximately 80,000), living in the Chaco and Formosa provinces bordering Paraguay; and the Mapuche (approximately 150,000), living in Neuquen, Rio Negro, and Chubut provinces near Chile.

During the military dictatorship, which took power in 1976 and lasted until its forced retreat in 1983 after losing the war over the Malvinas, the basic human rights of Indian peoples worsened. A large part of their land was seized and harsh repression was imposed on the leaders who protested. At the present there are six Indians who have "disappeared." It is believed that they were killed along with thousands of other people. In 1982, nine Chanés Indian children from Salta died of starvation. Likewise, five Mapuche elders in the southern province of Neuquen died of cold and hunger last winter.

With the return of democracy, Indian people have begun to organize once more. Several regional conferences have been held and federations have begun to form. Last November, the Diaguita-Calchaqui Congress was held in the northern province of Tucuman. Many people attended, supported also by worker and peasant organizations. At the request of the Indian organizations, the Senate has approved a general law for Indian people. This is the first time in Argentine history that Indian people have been publicly recognized as living legally in communities. Indians have also taken back part of their land which had been usurped by landowners and the military. The law will be voted on by the House of Representatives in March, 1985.

Indian people have never had titles to their lands or the right to live in traditional communities. After the so-called "War for Independence," the criollos (Spanish-descended Argentines) took power and created the political boundaries of the provinces as they appear today. The different Republican governments that followed, along with the landholders and the military, forced the Indian people off their lands, much as in the United States when the European population spread west. Today in Argentina most Indians have only small parcels of land which cannot sustain them. For example, in the southern province of Neuquen, where many Mapuche live, the army now owns a large farm called Pulmari which was formed from Indian lands. Since the army's latest acquisitions in 1979, this farm now totals 50,000 hectares.

Generally speaking, in Indian communities in Argentina today native languages are still spoken, but in the schools the official language has always been Spanish. Indian religious ceremonies are still practiced, but Christian religious sectors try to destroy Indian culture by discrediting these ceremonies, saying that they are acts of the devil. These religious groups are backed by the local authorities and landholders, because the Christianity that they follow is that of not resisting injustice. They move the Indians off the land and use them as cheap labor under working conditions no different from slavery.

While in Argentina, I had several meetings with Indian leaders from organizations such as Parcialidades Tobas (northeast), Federacion Diaguita-Calchaqui (north), Nehuen Mapu (Mapuches from the south), and Centro Kolla and Asociacion Indigena in Buenos Aires. They expressed to me a great interest in coming in contact with Indian people from North America in order to exchange experiences.

All Argentine Indian organizations will participate in a conference on "Racial Discrimination in the Americas" which will be held in Buenos Aires in June, 1985. This event has been organized by the World Council of Churches.

CHILE

About one million of the 11 million people who live in Chile are Mapuche Indians. Many live in traditional communities in the bountiful rural area south of Santiago. They have been subject to serious violations of their human rights since the military government was installed under General Pinochet in the bloody coup in 1973. In their struggle to resist the military, the Mapuche have become the vanguard of the campesino (peasant) population. Their demands include the right to their ancestral lands, the right to maintain and develop their culture, language, and traditions, and the right to decide their own destiny.



*PUEBLO Y TIERRA MAPUCHE!!
EJEMPLO DEL DESPOJO HISTORICO*

1984 was a year of "despojo" (plunder) and severe repression against the Mapuche people. Mapuche leaders were arrested and beaten by the local police on several occasions. In January of 1984, a young Mapuche student was found assassinated, supposedly by the Alianza Chilena Anticomunista. Later this same paramilitary organization threatened the lives of all members of AD-Mapu, an organization which represents the Mapuche people.