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Indian Movements and the Electoral Process



- Uprising in Ecuador
- Convention on Biodiversity
- Update on Chiapas
- International Meeting of Indigenous Women



LINKING INDIAN PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS

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On the Cover:

Resident of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, casting his vote for the 1994 Presidential elections in Mexico.
Photo: Courtesy of Global Exchange

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The so-called "cold war" between Capitalism and Socialism has been redefined. Instead of a conflict between "East and West," it now appears as a problem of North versus South. Today, the military impositions and economic proposals expressed in the concept of a "New World Order" do no more than fortify policies of oppression against Indigenous nations and territories.

For the Indigenous peoples, the oppression that began with the western invasion, and which has just completed its 502nd year, still continues as more threats loom over the horizon. International agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are nothing more than new legal instruments which serve to increase transnational companies' power to exploit natural and human resources without regard for Indigenous territories. It should not be forgotten that a large portion of these natural resources, such as biodiversity, petroleum, timber, minerals, etc. are found within Indigenous territories. For their part, the nation-states still largely refuse to recognize Indian territory and continue to dispose of it as they will, most recently, by ceding it to national and transnational companies within the new Neoliberal programs.

Governments and parliaments continue to make decisions for the oppressed majorities. Constitutional changes, new Agrarian laws, privatization of basic services, etc. are legal instruments, created without consulting the Indigenous organizations, in the name of "democracy." The Indigenous people demand participation in all decisions directly affecting Indigenous nations, territories, and cultural systems, and reject the assimilationist policies of the nation-state.

Without entering into an in-depth analysis of the concept of democracy imposed by the Western nation-state on the Indigenous nations with cosmic-spiritual-territorial bases, we have tried in this journal to present an (admittedly incomplete) picture of Indigenous participation in national elections.

The diverse experiences illustrated here demonstrate that Indian organizations offer new possibilities to renovate the nation-state. They also reveal the need for autonomous political positions and the formation of coalitions under equal conditions. Of course, not all of the Indigenous experiences have been positive. However, many of these, both good and bad, provide lessons from which we can learn in order to reformulate our future strategies.

Indigenous participation in the nation-states' electoral processes is only one aspect of the different strategies we need to pursue. Access to parliaments gives us more power to propose and pressure for the adoption and appropriate implementation of progressive international agreements such as the International Labor Organization's Convention 169, which is currently only recognized by seven governments. Other international agreements such as the UN Declaration on the Principles and Rights of Indigenous peoples require further pressure from the Indigenous organizations to the U.N. bodies in order to obtain an international convention signed by the colonial governments, recognizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples and not just a Declaration without implementing measures.

We believe that it is imperative for the Indigenous movement to work in coordinated fashion at the continental and world level to produce joint proposals for appropriately adopting and furthering the scope of these international legal instruments. We have to remember that, although the legal instruments are available, they need to be ratified by nation-states, but also, in some cases, those legal instruments need to be taken further, according to Indigenous organizations' understanding of such matters. Otherwise, these instruments will remain in the hands of nation-states without Indigenous input.

SAIIC Board of Directors

Massive Coca-grower's March on La Paz, Bolivia

Bolivian security forces unsuccessfully tried to turn away a protest march of several thousand *campesinos* headed for the capital city of La Paz in early September. Over fifty leaders were arrested, police confiscated baggage and even sandals in an attempt to prevent *campesinos* from joining the march.

The coca-growers were headed for La Paz to demand fair treatment for those who make their living growing coca. Coca leaf has long been important in the Andes because of its cultural and medicinal elements, but in recent years it has acquired significance as a cash crop which is used in the production of cocaine. Protesters are demanding the demilitarization of the Chapare region, protection of the coca-growing industry, compliance with agreements previously signed with the government, and the release of arrested activists.

After three attacks by security forces, marchers chose to stay off the main roads to avoid further confrontation. *Campesinos* have been subjected to increased arbitrary arrests and seizures, intimidation and harassment, sexual abuse of women, and torture. Religious workers in the coca-growing Chapare region, say that the area has been completely militarized, and that the government has also been cracking down on non-governmental organizations who are supportive of the Indigenous *campesinos*.

The country's most powerful labor union, the Bolivian Workers Central (COB), held a 48-hour strike in La Paz on Sept. 15 and 16 to pressure the government on the coca-growers' behalf. In response, President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada called a national dialogue to discuss the "coca-cocaine" problem and to seek consensus solutions. The coca-growers emerged from this dialogue with a preliminary agreement which meets several of their key demands.

Letters demanding respect for the human rights of campesinos and NGO workers in the coca regions can be sent to Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, Fax: 591-2-391216

Adapted from:

Weekly News Update on the Americas, Nicaragua Solidarity Network of Greater New York, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012.

Argentina: Constitution Finally Recognizes Indigenous Rights

Argentina's constitutional revision on Aug. 11 this year recognized Indigenous peoples' rights after a series of postponements by the drafting commission. After much debate, Article 67 of the constitution was modified to read:

[the state] recognizes concurrently with the provinces, the pre-existence of the Indigenous peoples that make up the Argentinian nation, guaranteeing respect for their ethnic and cultural identity, the legal status of their communities; the possession and communal

ownership of lands that they traditionally occupy; making available sufficient and suitable lands for their human development, which will be inalienable and not subject to seizure; assure their access to bilingual and intercultural education; and their participation in decisions regarding the rational use, administration and conservation of natural resources; in the development of their interests; and in national life.

Nonetheless, the final text relating to communal ownership of traditionally-occupied lands ended up only partially satisfactory. The original Indian proposal used the word "guaranteed" in respect to ownership of these lands. The governing Justicialista Party, alarmed by the supposed legal and economic consequences of this proposal, pushed the drafting commission to rephrase this with the word "regulate"—which obviously has different implications. In the final compromise, the commission settled on the word "recognize" which implies at least that communities will be able to secure ownership of lands for which they already have titles.

Settlement Between Texaco and Ecuadorian Government Sidesteps Indigenous People

U.S.-based multinational oil company, Texaco Inc. and the Ecuadorian government have reached a tentative agreement—subject to Ecuadorian President Sixto Durán Ballen's approval—on clean-up and restoration of former oil production sites in Ecuador's remote Oriente region.

The populations, particularly Indigenous peoples, whose communities have been devastated by twenty years of accumulated toxic dumping and oil spills, were never consulted in the process of negotiating this settlement. Indigenous and colonist organizations have been fighting for years, in alliance with environmental groups and lawyers, to force Texaco to carry-out a thorough clean-up and restoration of the areas it polluted and to provide health services and monitoring of oil related ailments within affected communities.

Texaco's oil operations have spilled some 16.8 million gallons of crude oil into the Oriente. The company also voluntarily dumped 20 billion gallons of water containing toxic hydrocarbons, chemicals and heavy metals, into the region's waterways. Roads built by Texaco have blazed the way for deforestation of over 2.5 million acres of rainforest by opening previously isolated Indian territories to colonization by farmers and ranchers. On terminating its operations in 1990, Texaco made no effort to clean up the toxic mess it left behind.

Indigenous umbrella organizations including COICA, CONAIE and CONFENAIE as well as the environmental coalitions CEDENMA and Amazon For Life will not accept this exclusive bilateral settlement between Texaco and the Ecuadorian government. The government's interests and the

communities' interests are not congruent. The state-owned oil company CEPE (now Petroecuador) worked in consortium with Texaco as a co-polluter and will have to pick up the tab for 65.5% of any remediation bill. Given the Ecuadorian government's financial liability in this situation, organizations fear that their government will not adequately meet the needs of the communities that have been impacted. For this reason, Indigenous organizations must be fully involved in negotiating any settlement if a truly effective plan for environmental restoration and human health care is to be designed, financed and implemented.

Please write or fax Texaco and the Ecuadorian government immediately expressing your concern.

Presidente Sixto Durán Ballen, Presidente de la República del Ecuador, Palacio Presidencial, Calle García Moreno, Quito, Ecuador.
Fax: 593-2-580-735

Alfred C. DeCrane Jr., CEO and Chairman of the Board, Texaco, Inc., 2000 Westchester Ave., White Plains, NY 10650.
Fax: 914-253-7753

Information supplied by the Rainforest Action Network.

Paraguay-Parana Waterway Threatens Largest Wetlands in the Americas

More than forty scientific, environmental and Indigenous organizations launched an international campaign in early Sept. to protect the vast Pantanal wetlands from a "mega-project" known as the Parana-Paraguay Hidrovia (or waterway). Organizations met in Chapada dos Guimarães in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso to discuss the Pantanal's current situation and the proposed waterway. According to these diverse organizations, the Pantanal already suffer tremendous impacts caused by gold and diamond mining, logging, urban sewerage, industrial pollution, pesticide and herbicide run-off and over-fishing.

The proposed waterway would include several massive engineering projects to straighten, deepen and "regulate" the channel of the Paraguay River. The governments of Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay hope that the waterway will open the river's upper sections to year-round industrial shipping, and have applied to the Inter-American Development Bank and other sources for funding. International funders are wary, however, until an environmental impact statement (EIS) has been completed.

The groups meeting in Chapada dos Guimarães are therefore demanding full participation in the EIS process. They also demand that it take into account all social and environ-

mental costs, and comprehensively evaluate the waterway's impacts, including those to all 2,000 miles of river that will be affected.

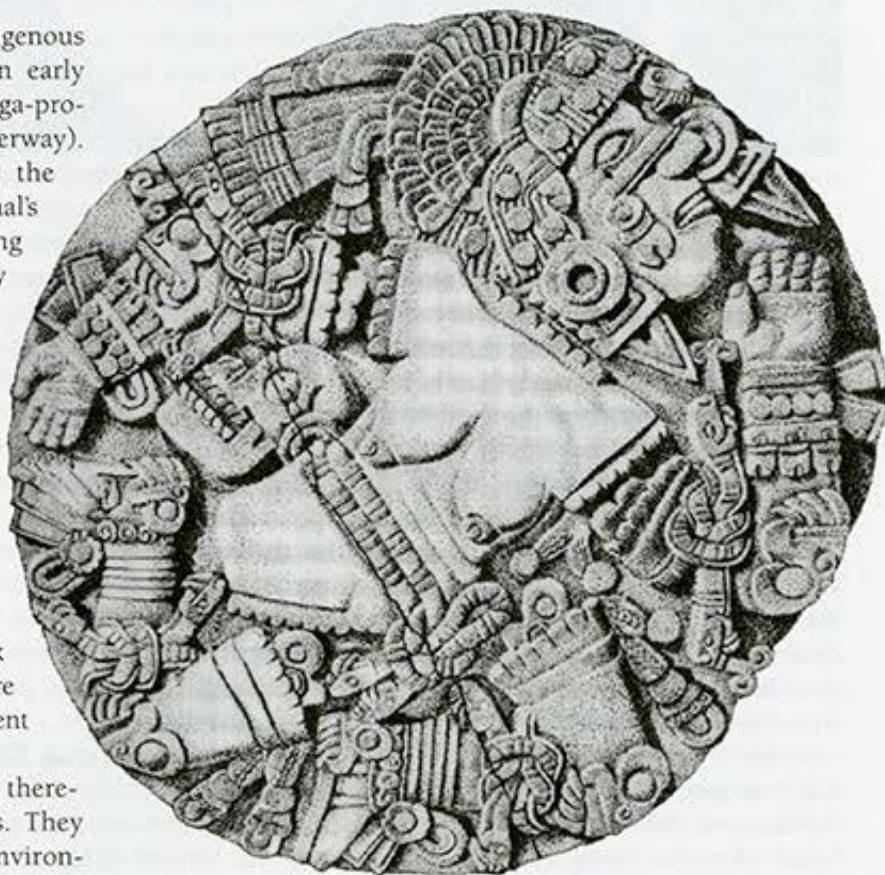
Information supplied by the International Rivers Network.

Venezuelan Indians Seek Constitutional Rights

Representatives of Venezuela's twenty-seven Indigenous peoples began a series of meetings at the Latin American Indigenous Parliament Center in Caracas to demand that their rights be included in the national constitution, which congress is currently attempting to reform.

Jesús Jiménez, Venezuela's only Indigenous congressman, explained that the 350,000 Indigenous people living in this country seek inclusion for their rights to land, use of their languages and recognition of dual citizenship for those peoples living along the Colombian and Brazilian borders. Jiménez pointed out that Colombia's Indigenous legislation guarantees dual citizenship in such cases, including for the 10,000 Wayu who inhabit the Colombian-Venezuela border area. The Indigenous representatives will also try to secure guarantees for participation in legislative powers at the national, regional, municipal, and local levels.

Information courtesy of Ansa News Agency Inc.



In the following section we present a review of the Indian movement's experiences with electoral processes over the last year. Members of the movement provide analyses intended both to expose the problems and dangers of the nation-state's existing political processes, and to evaluate the Indian movement's political weaknesses, and thereby strengthen future political participation. Opinions in these articles belong to their authors, and are not necessarily those of SAIC.

Elections in Mexico: Indigenous Suffrage Under Protest

By Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor

The Mexican Constitution was modified in 1992 to include certain new Indigenous rights. Unfortunately, this reform has never been implemented, and Indigenous forms of social organization and democratic representation still lack legal recognition. Despite many efforts to pass legislation guaranteeing Indian representation in congress over the past three years, none have been adopted because Indigenous organizations still lack allies to support these proposals. Thus, Mexico's Indigenous peoples have access to the nation's congress only through participation in the political parties.

At the same time, there is ample consensus among the nation's Indigenous organizations that the political parties are not adequate mechanisms for bringing Indigenous representatives to congress. This conclusion has been reinforced by the marginal placement of Indigenous demands in the political parties' agendas, in addition to the absence of Indigenous representation in their leadership struc-

tures. Faced with this situation, Indigenous people have become increasingly doubtful about working through the political parties. Consequently, the traditional parties have gradually lost political control within the country's Indigenous regions.

Thus, despite the high turnout of Indigenous voters for the Aug. 21 presidential elections nationally, several Indigenous regions refused to vote in their entirety. A significant number of community assemblies, like that of San Juan Comalapa in Oaxaca, rejected the establishment of polling places in their communities and decided to remain outside the electoral process. Not just this town, but practically the entire Triqui region in Oaxaca boycotted the election. Of those Indigenous people who voted nationwide, many did so under protest: unhappy with the partisan system, but conscious of the need to contribute with their vote to the country's political future.

National Indigenous Electoral Convention

For the first time in contemporary Mexican history, delegates representing

nearly 100 politically diverse Indigenous organizations met in Mexico City on March 4 and 5 to develop a common national electoral strategy. The Convention presented presidential candidates attending the meeting with a consensus program with universal Indigenous demands. At the same time, the Convention demanded candidates to specify their policies on the right to self-determination, as well as representation in congress. The Assembly's program demanded that political parties agree to the creation of a Sixth Electoral District, exclusively for Indigenous peoples, and that they reserve a quota of 10% of their candidacies for Indigenous representatives.

Although the candidates reiterated their commitment to the Indigenous people—especially due to the pressure caused by events in Chiapas—they did not adopt the demand for a new districting as their own. Only the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) responded by reserving three candidacies in the lower house and two in the senate for Indian leaders. Though not insignificant, this gesture is certainly limited—especial-

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Photo: Carlos Contreras

Pre-election protestors denouncing the ruling party's role in past atrocities against civilians carried out by the military.

ly if it is taken into account that Mexico's Indigenous people constitute more than 15% of the population. The governing Institutional Revolutionary Party will have no more than two Indigenous deputies and one Indigenous senator.

National Democratic Convention in Chiapas

On June 13, based on the overwhelming majority of the vote within their supporter communities the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) refused the Mexican government's peace proposal. At the same time the EZLN announced a strategy to seek unity the civilian movement pushing for a transition to national democracy. To this end, they summoned a diverse group of orga-

nizations and individuals from throughout the country to a National Democratic Convention (CND) from Aug. 8 to 10, within Zapatista territory in the Lacandon Jungle. Astonishingly, over 6,000 delegates from throughout Mexico made the long journey to attend this event in the isolated and previously obscure community of Aguascalientes.

As with practically all events organized by the "civil society"—that is, mestizo society—Indigenous participation was marginal and the number of delegates was scarcely significant. Despite the limited number of participants, Indigenous organizations came to a consensus proposal for use in the discussion table. Thus, half of the resolutions at the round table for a Constitutional Congress and a New

Constitution related to Indigenous peoples rights, gathering in a synthesis of the proposals presented by the Independent Indian Peoples Front (FIPI), along with those of other delegations. The final text of the Convention read as follows:

As concerns the Indigenous peoples, the National Democratic Convention resolves that their autonomy, self-determination and territorial rights be recognized; that the customary right of Indigenous people be elevated to a constitutional right; that a new chapter on Indigenous people, elaborated by the Indigenous peoples themselves, be integrated in the New Constitution. The policy will be elaborated on seven axes: land, employment, justice, economy, freedom, health and education. That articles 115 through 122 be

revised to strengthen municipalities and establish the Indigenous regions. That the Fourth article be modified to conform a Sixth Plurinomial Districting for Indigenous representation, that the right to education be made effective and that this education respects and integrates the diversity of all Indigenous peoples, their traditions, customs, and languages. Education should be free at all levels, democratic, lay, scientific, humanistic, national and critical. Education for Indigenous people must be bilingual at all levels.

In spite of the importance of this paragraph, it is important to acknowledge that Indigenous perspectives and the aspirations of the Indigenous people in Mexico were not the central theme of the CND—this despite the convention's location in the heart of the conflict zone, within territory held by an army, nearly all of whom are Indian.

Fragile Coalition Divides in Chiapas

A political watershed leading up to the National Democratic Convention was the fragmentation into two halves of the Indigenous and Campesino State Council of Chiapas (CEOIC). It was evident that the Convention would express

opposition to the government and the official (PRI) party. Predictably, the government tried to forestall CEOIC's participation in the CND by trying to create divisions within the coalition. Unfortunately, these prospered. Half of CEOIC—made up of organizations largely financed by the government or the PRI—stood against participation in the Convention. The other half—the self-proclaimed Independent CEOIC—endorsed, and then joined the CND. The independent CEOIC maintains a line of civilian support for the Zapatista proposals and negotiations, and continues to contribute significantly to the extension of “civilian bridges” into the conflict zone.

Elections in Chiapas

August 21, election day, was particularly significant for Chiapas. The state's elections contrasted sharply with those in the rest of the country. For the first time in the highland and jungle regions of Chiapas, Indigenous people exercised their citizen's right to vote in massive fashion. For the first time they voted of their own free will, without impositions, and without being coerced. For the first time the Indigenous vote in Chiapas was not for the PRI.

At the national level, the PRI once

again appropriated—through fraud and multiple electoral transgressions that have not been investigated—over 90% of the seats for in the House of Deputies and almost 100% of those for the Senate. Nonetheless, the disappointment felt by Indigenous peoples did not coalesce into a post-electoral struggle. When the elections were over, Indigenous organizations returned to their previous struggles and tactics. The PRD vote cast by the majority of Chiapas' Indigenous peoples was not a truly partisan vote. The PRD was perceived as the best party at hand, but not necessarily as their own party, or as one that identifies wholly with their interests.

Votes garnered by the PRD in Chiapas awarded two seats in the lower house to Indian leaders. These are: Antonio Hernandez (see interview in Vol. 8:1&2), Maya-Tojolabal, state leader of the Independent Central of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (CIOAC), and Mario Landeros, candidate for the Xi'nich organization of Palenque. Elsewhere, Martin Equihua representing the Guerrero 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance State Council also won a seat in the lower house through the PRD vote. Euldarico Hernandez, Chontal writer and leader from the state of Tabasco, secured a seat in the senate, along with Hector Sanchez, leader of the Worker-Campesino Student Coalition of the Isthmus.

The present political balance is certainly not what Indigenous organizations demand, nor what justly corresponds to their peoples. Nevertheless, the Indigenous movement will have at least three authentic advocates in the next legislature. These delegates are committed to constitutional reforms elaborated by the Indigenous National Electoral Convention including: the right to govern their territories according to norms established by their customs and usage, and the right to Indigenous representation in congress through special districting without dependence upon the political parties. 🐾

Photo: Jilian Black



Maya residents of Altamirano, Chiapas line up to vote; observers at polling places in the town reported significant irregularities.

Reconstructing the Ayllu: toward Renewal of the Bolivian State



Photo: Cristina Marquez

Marching for territory and dignity

By María Eugenia Choque and Carlos Mamani

Last year's elections in Bolivia culminated in August with the victory of wealthy industrialist Gonzalo ("Goni") Sánchez de Lozada and Aymara Indian intellectual Víctor Hugo Cárdenas, leaders of two distinct political traditions: Goni from the leftist-turned-centrist Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR) credited with "modernizing" Bolivia, and Víctor Hugo from the Aymara Tupac Katari Revolutionary Movement of Liberation (MRTKL). Their election triggered celebrations among various sectors of the Bolivian population.

On the night of Aug. 5, the coliseum in La Paz was the scene of a grand, picturesque ceremony organized by the MNR. Indigenous people participated in a ritual of homage and recognition in which representatives of almost all of the native groups in the country presented symbols of power and authority to Gonzalo Sánchez and Víctor Hugo. It symbolized their acceptance as "native authorities." The presentation took place in a colorful atmosphere of *wiphalas* (multi-colored patchwork Aymara flags which have come to represent Indian Unity). The ceremony was a perfect artifice showing Indian integration and ascendance to power—by

way of the vice-president elect. Furthermore, the president appeared (how marvelous!) to be seeking Indigenous recognition before taking power.

Alliance with the Tupac Katari Revolutionary Movement of Liberation (MRTKL) was a great success for the MNR, leading to a decisive electoral victory. The MRTKL, for their part, gained five seats in Congress, a small role in the administration of the state, and the creation of a National Secretariat of Ethnic Affairs. Qualitatively, however, their presence in parliament is more limited than that of the first Indian deputies in parliament (including Cárdenas himself) in the 1980s.

Since the election, political propaganda has tried to show that the Indigenous movement—with Víctor Hugo at its head—is part of the government. Or, at least, that it is willing to wait to be vindicated through reforms proposed by the government in new laws of popular participation, education, and privatization.

The situation in Bolivia can be understood as the continuation of an inter-ethnic relationship in which the *criollo* (people of European descent) groups in power use the art of simulating Indian political participation, to perfection. They accomplish this by putting on shows such as that described above and through their newly acquired ability to integrate

Indigenous individuals into the political elite. These individuals must only pass an exam where sacrifice, higher education, desire for power and prestige, and the denunciation of their ideals appear to be the deciding factors. Within this context, it is not saying too much to point out that Víctor Hugo appeared in electoral propaganda representing the continuation of the state's integrationist policies such as the agrarian reform of 1953.

Given the State's visible security in its control over the Indigenous population, we ask here, what is the state of the Indian Movement?

History of the Movement

Today's Indian movement is neither a recent phenomenon, nor the result of the 1952 revolution. It is the continuation, although in fragmented form, of a movement of *caciques* (traditional chiefs) which was led in the first half of this century by Santos Marka T'ula, Eduardo Nina Qhispi, Gregorio Ventura, Rufino Villca, Feliciano Aruquipa, Celedonio Luna, Mateo Alfaro, and others. These *caciques* struggled for the survival of the Indigenous people and proposed the "renewal of Bolivia" with the institutionalization of respect for diversity and plurality. In their analysis of domestic and international policies (1920-1936), they

Continued on page 33

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Photo: Guatemala News and Information Bureau

Guatemala:

Maya Movement At The Political Crossroads



Maya "Communities of Populations in Resistance" (CPR's) left hidden communities in the Ixcán jungle in February of this year to establish an open political presence.

By Estuardo Zapeta.

In June of 1993, following the failed self-coup d'état by former President Jorge Serrano Elias, the Permanent Maya Assembly submitted a list with three names for the Vice-presidency. This act in itself shook the Guatemalan political establishment, demonstrating the new assertiveness of the country's Indigenous movement. This previously little known political current is now one of the strongest in Guatemalan society. Paradoxically the "Serranazo," as Serrano Elias' attempted coup was nicknamed, helped the Maya movement emerge onto the national stage. Nonetheless, and perhaps due to a lack of political experience, Maya organizations have fallen far short of their political potential in recent years. This year, two political events reflect on the situation faced by the movement. On Jan. 30, a majority of voters approved

newly-appointed President Ramiro de Leon Carpio's proposed constitutional revision amidst massive abstentionism. Then, on Aug. 14, parliamentary elections were held in which former military dictator Rios Mont, whose administration from 1981-82 was responsible for the bloodiest repression of the Maya population in recent history, won a seat in congress.

The Political Movement: Internal and External Factors

Maya Indians are the majority in Guatemala with over 60% of the population. They are also victims of the Western Hemisphere's longest and most bloody modern civil wars. Understanding the emerging Maya political participation requires a look at both internal and external factors affecting the movement in recent years.

There are three major internal influences on Maya political activism. First, strong opposition to celebration of the Quincentenary of Columbus' so-called

discovery of the Americas in 1992 unified organizations in a common cultural and political cause. Second, numerous Mayan organizations have formed in the countryside. These range from agricultural cooperatives to a national system of Mayan schools, and they have begun to consolidate local power as the basis of an effective political participation. Third, ethnic issues have become a matter of national debate since the agenda for peace talks between the government and the guerrilla movement was modified to include a point on "Identity and Rights of the Indigenous People."

Advances made by the movement have unfortunately been undermined by power struggles within the Indian leadership. Fueled by the lack of clear political objectives, this in-fighting slowly gnaws away at achievements made over the last three years. Additionally, one effect of the diminished influence of Marxist discourse has been the new recognition of previously ignored cultural differences among the

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Maya peoples. These differences have in turn, accelerated the internal competition for power.

Externally, Maya political participation faces challenges generated by last year's failed coup d'état, the nation's general democratic crisis and the Aug. 14 congressional elections. International pressure on the Guatemalan government has also contributed to the opening of political spaces for the Maya.

Of Elections And The Elected

The Indigenous movement discovered its first "political thermometer" in President Carpio's referendum for the proposed constitutional revision. The revision was aimed at purging the corrupt Serrano congress and represented a fundamental clash between the executive and legislative powers. The Indigenous movement could have exploited this division, but political inexperience limited any gains. The principal Mayan organizations threw their support behind the president's constitutional changes. In exchange, the president approved a National Indigenous Fund. The Maya people could have gained much more.

President Carpio's constitutional revision was approved with a majority "yes" vote on Jan. 30, but turnout was a shockingly low 16% of the electorate. Poor communication between the Indigenous national and grassroots organizations prevented any significant political participation. Yet Maya organizations have learned that politicians now place importance on the Indigenous vote.

National congressional elections were held on August 14, 1994. Surprisingly, former military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt and his Republican Front party emerged with a significant victory. Ríos Montt's tenure as dictator in 1981-1982 was one of the bloodiest ever endured by the Mayan people. At that time, his "bullets and beans" counter-insurgency program razed hundreds of Maya villages to the ground. His victory however is not as surprising as it appears.

This is true, first of all, because only 20% of the electorate voted. Secondly, Ríos Montt exploited law and order rhetoric in a country where criminal activity is second only to poverty as a social problem. The ex-dictator is also a born-again Protestant, and could therefore count on nearly unanimous support from the evangelical Protestant population. In 1990, 36% of the population was estimated to be Protestant, the highest proportion of any country in predominantly Catholic Latin America. Evangelical advances are not surprising in rural, Mayan communities. This success results from a well-planned and well-funded wave of evangelical missionizing from the United States.

The Maya people and the former dictator will face their real challenges in the Nov. 1995 presidential elections. Unless Ríos Montt can engineer a constitutional revision, he will be barred—as a former dictator—from seeking the presidency. At the same time, moderate right-wing parties, who are best placed to win the presidency, have shown little concern for Ríos Montt and are turning their attention to the Indigenous vote. For instance, the National Advancement Party (PAN), has been in "secret" talks with the Autonomous Movement of Masses, an organization working for political education and organization in poor Indigenous and *mestizo* communities.

Military Ethno-hysteria

Within the political process, the Indigenous movement cannot underestimate the army's presence and power. This institution, which has systematically opposed any Maya political participation, is undergoing one of its worst times. It's important to remember that the army has free and permanent access to most Maya communities through paramilitary squads known as Civil Defense Patrols: it has established throughout the countryside. The current number of active members in the Civil Defense Patrols is estimated at over

500,000: 95% of these are Maya.

A serious internal division, "loss" of the communist enemy, a re-definition of its role after initial peace talks, and a problem of "image" both at the national and international level, are just few of the problems faced by the Guatemalan army.

The appointment of General Julio Otzoy Colaj, Maya-caqchiquel from the town of Comalapa, as Vice-Minister of Defense is widely perceived as an attempt to turn back Maya political advances. Otzoy never identifies himself as Maya and leads the army's ultra-conservative sector. Otzoy explained in a recent interview that "due to the serious ethnic problem" facing Guatemala, there is great risk for the emergence of an "ethnically-based guerrilla movement" in the next ten years. The recent "Maya Nation hypothesis" and the new ideas on Maya autonomy have increased Otzoy's fears. Although these ideas are mere speculations, the conservative military increasingly accuses Maya organizations of subversion and separatism.

The ultra-right is also haunted by the possibility that the Guatemalan govern-



Ex-dictator Ríos Montt's campaign slogan proclaiming "With us, your vote counts."

Photo: Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archives

ment might ratify Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. This would increase the international legal validity of rights claimed by Maya organizations.

at the end of the 1980s. The Indigenous National Front (FIN) was founded for this purpose. This political organization faded out, basically, because it had neither the people nor the money to be heard at the national level. Work at the local level has

Indigenous leaders who participated in Christian Democratic President Vinicio Cerezo Arevalo's administration. Many outstanding accusations of corruption and financial mismanagement remain against them. Though Minister Tay Coyoy is the first Indian to reach such a high position in Guatemalan government, the fact that his activities continue to be opaque has not helped the consolidation of the political party.

The Maya dilemma has always been whether to participate in the electoral system's existing parties in order to gain new spaces, and eventually rise to shape party platforms themselves or to create their own political associations, capable of participating at the national level. The Indigenous movement is also limited by a lack of economic power. Maya organizations are facing financial crises at the national, regional, and local levels.

This has only been overcome at the local level, where the Maya obviously have more opportunities.

The Challenge Ahead

Though many have argued that the congress elected on Aug. 14 represents a challenge to Mayan political participation, the opposite is in fact true. It is the Maya who represent a challenge to the congress. The congress's short duration (one year) and its ideological composition which leans heavily toward the right wing (which ignores Indigenous demands), indicates that the Indigenous movement should take the time to re-evaluate its position and design strategies that reflect Guatemala's socio-political reality.

Recent publication of *Rujunamil Ri Mayab' Amaq* (Rights of the Maya People) has also fueled the army's fears. In sum, these military sectors see any Indigenous political progress as a national security threat. However, the "young officers" sector and the army's so-called "progressive wing" are to some extent forcing the ultra-conservative groups to be more tolerant toward political indigenous participation. It will be up to the political abilities of the Maya organizations to take advantage of these divisions within the army.

Dilemmas and Limitations of Political Participation

The first Maya attempts at direct national political participation took place

been visibly more effective than at the national or regional level. For example, the Cante Civic Committee, an Indigenous grassroots organization, has kept control of the Mayor's office for the last ten years, even while competing with the established national parties.

The most recent national efforts for Maya political participation was through the Sociedad Ixim, a committee that promoted formation of a political party. This committee is covertly directed by the current minister of education, Alfredo Tay Coyoy, Maya-K'iche' from Quetzaltenango. Christian Democratic parties both within Guatemala and Europe are also supporting this effort in near secrecy. Among the ranks of this group are



The army maintains a political presence in most Maya communities through the Civil Defense Patrols.

The following points require evaluation:

a) Substantial changes in the political discourse.

The radical nature of the Mayan political discourse—based on stagnant leftist ideas from the 1960s—has become obsolete in 1994. This discourse does not help Indian political participation; to the contrary, it reaffirms the fear and ethno-hysteria of the army and the economically powerful sectors. In short, this discourse is characterized by inconsistent populism, the insistence that the Maya's only problem is unjust land distribution, and by a radical environmentalism that defends the adoption of exotic lifestyles. This is not the Mayan people's discourse, but rather results from an influx of ideas from Marxist, environmental and other radical groups from Europe and the United States.

b) The creation of a solid base of leadership.

The lack of Maya leaders is another challenge the movement will have to overcome in order to achieve effective political participation. This lack of leadership was patently obvious during the recent congressional elections. Although a good number of Indian candidates ran for office, only five—out of a congress with eighty members—were elected. Abstentionism added to the fact that Mayan candidates were virtually unknown, guaranteed this result. Remarkably, the five winning candidates ran with right-wing parties. An urgent imperative for Maya organizations is to "train" new leaders who can act as catalysts for the thoughts and feelings of the Mayan people.

c) Clarification and unification of realistic goals and objectives.

The current debate over the Mayan

autonom, is a perfect example of confusion within the Indigenous movement of its own political objectives. When Indigenous rights, Mayan education, the Guatemalan Indigenous Fund, and compulsory military service—to mention just a few national issues—are added to subject of autonomy, the confusion becomes even more apparent. The Mayan organizations, independent of the means they decide to adopt, must together clarify their objectives and set goals for the short and long-run. The current political confusion naturally supports the State's argument that: "the Mayas don't know what they want or where they want to go." We must recognize in advance that this process of clarification and unification of goals does not necessarily imply a political homogenization. Unity within diversity has sustained the movement up to now. This claim is supported by way in which the different Indigenous fronts united in opposition to the 500 years celebration.

d) Political education at the community level.

In Guatemala, the Maya will have to redirect their efforts toward an effective political participation within the communities. In a country where power is highly centralized, traditional politics have completely neglected the rural areas. The consolidation of Maya organizations throughout the country is the best indication that efforts for political education at the community level are feasible. In this sense, the army also has recognized the political potential of the rural areas through the Civil Self-Defense patrols.

e) A relationship with the moderate right.

The serious consideration of possible relations with a Congress dominated by right-wing parties has become necessary. The strong initial opposition

that some right-wing parties demonstrated toward Rios Mont must be seen by the Indigenous movement as representing a range of possibilities for participation. The Indigenous movement must take advantage of the liberal mindsets of the center-right parties' younger generations.

f) De-minorization of the majority.

In a country where the Mayan majority has always been perceived and treated like a minority, it is necessary to intelligently demonstrate the numerical possibilities. In principle, politics is a numbers game. The Indigenous movement must take advantage of its majority status to win the necessary social and economic changes.

g) Continuing diplomatic work at the international level.

The Mayan people must continue to carry out diplomacy at a global level. This has been an extremely effective political tool that would be unwise to neglect.

In the final analysis, the new generations of Guatemalan Mayas, the so-called "children of repression," have the greatest challenges and responsibilities toward their people. The challenges they confront are many, and changes at the national, regional and global level are rapid. Achieving change at the national level will depend on a realistic vision of goals and political means congruent with global political changes. Post-war Guatemala represents another challenge at the macro-social level for contemporary Mayans. Having been born and raised in war-time, the new Maya generations, as well as the new *mestizo* generations, will have to look for ways of peaceful and respectful coexistence in a multicultural and multilingual country like Guatemala. All Guatemalans will have to insist on the possibility of unity within diversity. ♡

Special Indian Districting: Unresolved Political Problems in Colombia

Members of the Colombian Indigenous movement are now trying to critically evaluate the movement's political participation in order to surpass the constraints that have kept many Indigenous objectives out of reach. The following article reflects this process of self-criticism, as well as the movement's search for new solutions.

by Alfonso Palma Capera and Oskar Benjamin Gutiérrez

Without doubt one of the worst "headaches" that the Indigenous movement has endured is the problem of electoral participation. In 1990, when Lorenzo Muelas, Alfonso Peña Chepe and Francisco Rojas Birry participated in construction of Colombia's new constitution they were sure that it would be extremely difficult to carry out the reforms they were outlining. Four years and two parliamentary elections later, Indigenous political participation—within those spaces that Indigenous people themselves have forced open—is in deep crisis due to the political inexperience of Indigenous representatives, lack of unity among Indigenous organizations and parties, and failure to skillfully manage relationships with the government.

On March 13 of this year, Indigenous communities elected Lorenzo Muelas and Gabriel Mujuy as their representatives to the Senate thanks to the system of Special Electoral Districting (CEE), one of the most important political achievements of the Colombian Indigenous movement.

Article 176 of the revised constitution created the CEE as a system reserving two

seats in the senate for Indigenous candidates. The CEE allows Indigenous "lists" (names on the party ticket) registered under the special district to compete for these seats independently of the senate races for the other one hundred seats within the National Electoral District. The Indigenous movement won the CEE through its advanced level of organization in a bitter struggle with the traditional institutions. It should not in any way be seen as a gift from the Colombian state.

The proliferation of candidates this year—eight different Indigenous lists—reflected the movement's lack of unity. In many cases, the vote was split even within the same ethnic group. Many Indigenous people who wanted to support their own cause did not know for whom to vote. Not knowing the candidates, the electorate was forced to decide "by sight" which candidate on the ballot seemed to represent their cause. The Indigenous candidates used their experience in previous elections, and attempted to extend their appeal to the population in general and capture votes in non-Indigenous communities. This may explain why only three Indigenous parties registered their list under the CEE, while five sought office through the National Electoral District, competing with the other political groups under equal conditions.

The results were clear. On one hand, the Indigenous vote was diluted. This reflects disunity and lack of coordination among so many candidates, but it also reflects the immense level of abstention among ethnic minorities. On the other hand, the large number of votes obtained by some Indigenous candidates in the urban areas suggests that non-Indian voters looked to Indigenous candidates as an alternative capable of generating debate with the traditional parties.

First Experience

Three different lists registered for the 1992 senate and chamber of deputies elections. The first was headed by Gabriel Muyuy for the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC); the second, was backed by the Indigenous Authorities of Colombia (AICO) headed by Floro Alberto Tunubalá; and the third, that of the Indigenous Social Alliance headed by Antonio Quirá Gauña was created by a faction of the Indigenous movement especially for electoral participation and registered within the national district. For the first time in Colombian history, three Indians held seats in the senate as representatives of their own communities.

The Indigenous lists succeeded in that moment largely due to their use of an Indigenous program of action titled "The

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Colombia that We Want." This platform reflected a conception of Indians not as islands, but as part of a diverse country, and reached out to all the sectors of the country. It was grounded in culture, plurality and tolerance and called the nation-state's attention to a new and independent discourse with alternative proposals.

This proposal was elaborated by working groups at the local, regional and national levels during the National Constitutional Assembly. These groups sought to develop a clear legislative agenda and plan the new constitution's design and implementation. These work groups, however, were not re-assembled in following years, and the task of continuing to develop an Indigenous policy was left to the regional organizations which generally lack the advice and resources available to Indigenous Senators.

The Problems Increase

In spite of the political space obtained, the participation and influence of Indigenous peoples in projects and discussions has been limited due to the disadvantage of having only two senators as compared to ninety from the Conservative and Liberal parties and ten from other sectors. In addition to the corruption of these political entities, Indigenous representatives' programs have received little respect. As a politically inexperienced minority, the Indigenous representatives have not been able to resist the machinations of the traditional parties.

Confusion Between Organizations and Parties

In addition, the Indigenous movement suffers serious internal problems. The organizations have not completed enough basic work with their members to help them differentiate clearly between the political campaigns and their organizations. Regional organizations frequently support their members' political cam-

paigns without first drawing lines to distinguish the two activities. In this way leaders of some organizations enter political life and never return to work with their organizations. This situation has made many indigenous organizations skeptical and concerned about the relationship between politics and the organizations. For this reason the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) did not endorse any candidate in this election and does not plan to do so in the future, considering that doing so could deepen existing divisions.

Alliances and Alternatives

In order to gain access to public office, Indigenous candidates have sought the support of different movements that do not represent Indigenous interests. Several of the Indigenous candidates ran with the Conservative and Liberal parties.



Photo: Aguirre/Switkes

One of the first Indian senators, Anatolio Quira, played a key role in promoting Indian political participation during his term in office.

In consequence, many Colombians who previously saw the Indian candidates as a respite from the political panorama were disappointed at these alliances and the appearance that the Indian parties were immediately falling into the same old political customs. These doubts have been reinforced by the inefficiencies and

irresponsibilities of candidates who obtained some important seats (mayors, congressmen, senators), but who lacked training and experience in government.

Minorities Supported?

Operation of the special electoral district which Indian groups fought for so long to establish is now being questioned. Its establishment probably numerically increases minority representation and permits those sectors less involved with traditional politics to reach office. But there is also the risk that this mechanism could distort the expression of the ethnic communities' political will. Since voting within the special districts is not closely regulated, majorities may end up deciding who is elected in the name of the minorities. Many sectors within Colombia request a stricter regulation of the Districting, in order to strengthen the ethnic communities' participation.

The problems described above have resulted in the loss of many votes of those Colombians who did not find new or "clean" candidates or programs for government.

The Colombian Indigenous movement is now suffering from a state of apathy, finding hope only in what new laws can offer, rather than pressuring the State through marches and mobilizations. The presence of the Indian parliamentarians has helped establish the fundamental rights of ethnic groups and to open spaces for participation. However, it is now necessary for them to work toward reconstruction of their own fragmented forces in order to jointly face the traditional political establishment. Common proposals must be elaborated to form an electoral strategy capable of uniting with other sectors proposals who have traditionally shown solidarity with Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous movement is committed to this end, and the communities themselves will verify its development. 🐾

Barbados III: On Democracy and Diversity



We print below excerpts from the third declaration by the Barbados group of social scientists. The Barbados I declaration was an early and extremely influential document written by an international group of academics in support of Indigenous people's struggles. It is accompanied by an introduction by Stefano Varese, one of the group's founding members.

In 1971, on the Isle of Barbados, a group of Latin American anthropologists met under the auspices of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, and the World Council of Churches. The meeting took place at a time when the expansion of development in Amazonian Indigenous territories was escalating and when dependent capitalism's modernization project met with strong resistance from the Indigenous and peasant peoples of the Andes and Meso-America.

Simplistic political interpretations which employed an analytical framework overly concerned with economic issues hid the reality of ethnic conflicts during that neocolonial period. Leftists argued that only the triumph of a socialist revolution would solve the problems which Indigenous groups faced.

The Barbados I Declaration which resulted from that meeting, and the long book documenting it, had strong repercussions among academics, the indigenist sectors of the State bureaucracies, Catholic and Protestant missionaries, and, most of all, among organized Indigenous groups. Barbados I took on a life of its own among some Indian organizations in Latin America, who adopted it and used it as an instrument of struggle.

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Six years later, in 1977, the group met again in Barbados, this time accompanied by a matching number of Indigenous leaders and intellectuals. By this time, the Latin American political context had suffered a radical change. The national political projects for reform in Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Panama had been defeated and the most violent forms of State repression and terrorism had been instituted in a great number of countries in the region. An armed revolutionary struggle seemed a real possibility to many of the continental Indigenous movements. The Barbados II Declaration reflected this new reality. Unfortunately its impact on national societies and the organized Indigenous movement was not of the same magnitude as the previous one.

Finally, in December 1993, the Barbados Group met again in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to assess the situation of the Indigenous populations in the context of the sudden attack of Neo-Liberalism and renewed forms of Neo-Imperialism. The new conditions facing the Indigenous movement at the end of the second millennium include the collapse of the socialist "utopia," the vertiginous expansion of drug trafficking, the involvement of the United States in the promotion and repression of drug trafficking, and the rise and urgency of environmental issues.

The Barbados III Declaration, and the book that accompanies it (to be published

by Abya Yala Press in Quito) attempt to clarify some of these problems and contribute to the construction of a more just and dignified future for the Indigenous people.

Barbados III Declaration: Articulation of Diversity

More than two decades after our first declaration (1971), the members of the Barbados Group gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to reflect on the situation of the Indigenous peoples in Latin America and to document the persistence of secular forms of domination and exploitation that affect them. The development of new forms of colonization have aggravated this situation. We are witnesses in each of our countries to the repeated violations of their right to life, their dignity, and to the cultural and human universe of their local expressions.

At the same time we confirm the Indian peoples' will to resist and to live, expressed through the multiplication of their ethno-political organizations, and of the daily affirmation of cultural specificities that manifest the resilience of their civilizations.

The above stated, together with Indigenous peoples' demographic growth, defies the current project of globalization, which leads us towards a worldwide homogenization that is enforced by the expansion of and domination by a

western-oriented integrationist market system, whose technical, economic and ideological projects receive multi-national financing. The uniformity being pursued has generated profound political, economic and social asymmetry, even in the dominant countries.

The individualist and competitive Neo-Liberal discourse masks the real make-up of the growing inequality and of the conflict between nations, ethnic groups, classes and other social groups, creating an illusory equality, when in reality it confronts nation against nation, people against people, community against community. This is contrary to the spirit of solidarity of communities which is more conducive to human kinship. A world without alternate communities, without differentiated social groups, would be a world condemned to a lack of creativity and fraternal loyalties.

Just as for centuries each ethnic group was forced to integrate and incorporate itself into the ineffable virtues of an ill-defined national life, the same compulsive proposition is currently made to Latin American countries, with the intent of cementing their integration and incorporation into a planetary order controlled by a type of transnational oligopoly.

Simultaneously, the scientific knowledge brought by ecology, together with the well-founded warnings of environmentalism, have been misinterpreted and redefined by a tendency within this social movement. It seeks to impose the theory of the global management of natural resources but it ignores or minimizes the vernacular wisdom and knowledge, considering them incapable of creating a global environmental solution. However, this knowledge constitutes the social bases that maintain the bases of biodiversity in the world.

Today, the forces that dominate the regions with the greatest biodiversity have grown. Territories that were before the exclusive lands of Indigenous peoples

have been opened to colonizing expansion with the purpose of expropriating the tropical regions' enormous natural reserves like oil, minerals, timber and hydroelectric sources. This distorting tendency presents obstacles to the alliance of the diverse human communities that defend the ownership and usage of the natural resources under a socio-environmentalist current, which constitutes one of the most accurate and effective criticisms of the Neo-liberal premises of unlimited growth.

We observe the existence of processes for ethnic reaffirmation, conducive not only to cultural reproduction but also to the recovery of loyalties and patrimonies which were apparently lost. In the face of this the dominant society responds with new forms for the destruction of diversity, with obstacles and repressive political and judicial changes. Furthermore, the persistence of multiple forms of racism that disqualify and destroy experiences of alternative civilizations is generating processes of "de-Indianization," which ignores the fact that each culture destroyed or terminated is an irretrievable loss for the whole of humanity.

Democracy, as the philosophy of a Western social system, is centered on the individual and excludes collectives like Indigenous peoples. In this way an objectively viable plurality has been denied at the linguistic, social, economic and cultural levels. The deferred democratization of Latin America will continue to be an empty discourse and favorable only to the groups with hegemonic power if it does not take into account the necessary redefinition of the current States' territorial, political, social and cultural spaces. Building future democracy will require an increase in the presence and representation of different cultural communities and the respect for their political logic, which will contribute to the formation of plural-

istic, united, and complementarily-articulated societies.

The fragile Latin American Democracies, still monopolized by the interests of conservative sectors who in their majority descend from old European and colonial elites, have failed to generate the political spaces or legislative and administrative mechanisms necessary to allow Indigenous people to progress in building their own future. In particular, military ideologies which frequently degenerate into geo-political paranoia, see Indigenous societies as potentially subversive groups which threaten national unity, rather than as different peoples. Indigenous peoples demands for territor-

Democracy, as the philosophy of a Western social system, is centered on the individual and excludes collectives like Indigenous peoples

ial reorganization and more cultural and linguistic autonomy are thus seen as separatist efforts.

We exhort the presidents of the republics of Latin America to comply with the promise made to the Indigenous peoples in the Declaration of Guadalajara (Mexico, July 1991), in which they solemnly promised to ensure their economic and social well being, as well as to the obligation of respecting their rights and cultural identity. We also believe it necessary to approve the Charter of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which the UN promoted as well as the International labor Organization's Convention 169.

We likewise demand that legislative and judicial powers and political parties frame their laws, resolutions and activities with respect for ethnic pluralism and the inalienable rights to life, land, freedom and democracy. And especially, for them to carry through an effective effort to guarantee the respect for these rights at

the level of the regions or territories where Indigenous peoples live.

We recognize the initiatives formulated in recent years by international organizations (United Nations, UNESCO, Organization of American States, UNICEF, OIT and others) in favor of the Indigenous peoples of the continent and the world. Nonetheless the results have been limited. More pressure and vigilance regarding Indigenous peoples' current situation is necessary. The international organizations must pressure the Latin American heads-of-state to ratify and comply with international conventions on Indigenous peoples...

There is a simplistic and erroneous vision of what Indigenous participation should be in the actions and elaboration of Indigenist policies, in the formulation of community programs and of aid, and in the political process of mobilization of the civilian society itself. Such perspective assumes

A world without alternate communities, without differentiated social groups, would be a world condemned to a lack of creativity and fraternal loyalties.

that Indigenous peoples simply copy models of organization from unions or other sectors of the population. The ethnic continuity of Indigenous peoples cannot be solely understood as territorial control, but it requires the incorporation of political conceptions that are part of the diversity of their cultures.

Indigenous organizations have fulfilled a fundamental role in the revindication of the rights of the peoples they represent and in the construction of spaces for dialogue with each other and national and international powers. We cannot omit that some of their leaders have abused the mandate they received from their peoples and communities to embark upon a career of personal accumulation and power. When they assume the Criollo model of Clientelismo, and, more than a few times, of corruption, these leaders not only discredit themselves but they threaten the continuity and poten-

tial of political projects upon which Indigenous organizations embark.

We believe that the Indigenous organizations should reflect on these problems and rectify the individualist and competitive behaviors of those leaders who have distanced themselves from the spirit of solidarity in which their organizations were formed. This is the only guarantee for progress toward the crystallization of a just society, not only for the Indigenous people but for all of the oppressed sectors of humanity.

Many of Latin America's intellectuals continue to produce speeches referring to supposedly homogeneous national communities, devaluing or lending a folk stigma to alternate cultural presences. It is equally necessary to mention the historical responsibility that belongs to the right wing in the formulation of the ideological paradigms that guide the cultural and physical repression of Indigenous peoples. On the other hand, some dogmatic sectors -guided by theoretical mistakes- produced political practices that have contributed to the repression of ethnicity by considering it counter-productive to the class struggle...

It is also necessary to realize a radical questioning of some currents in the social sciences and in certain anthropology which is oriented more toward the aesthetic and sterile critique of its own disciplines than to political thought and action. This is also the case of a sector of linguistics that does not cooperate with ethnic communities, as well as not favoring the most appropriate methodologies for codifying, recovering and consolidating autochthonous languages.

There have been advances in the formulation of bilingual and intercultural educational policies, but these are far from being implemented. Education often places children against the family environment—even from the pre-school level—at critical times of primary socialization and learning of their mother tongue. This results in a subsequent deculturation in which languages

are converted into crutches for the acquisition of the dominant language and their own culture is lost to the hegemonic society. Whereas until now the State as well as private and religious groups has used the formal educational system to undermine ethnic identity, the school can eventually become a factor for cultural reproduction if Indigenous people effectively appropriate it for their own historical and cultural interests...

Indigenous people have an undeniable right to their history and cultural heritage. It is the obligation of the State and of secular society to promote an orderly and effective process for returning the knowledge collected on such peoples.

A process of Latin American democratization that effectively includes Indigenous peoples will not be viable if it does not take into account the necessity for geopolitical re-ordering that contemplates the specificities of Indigenous peoples' territoriality. In this sense, the concept of "peoples" corresponds to socially-organized human populations which are ethnically defined and endowed with a spacial dimension that is their territory. This is conceived as the confluence defined by the total and structured set of ecological, social and symbolic relations between a society and the geographical continuous or discontinuous space upon which it acts. This should include the numerous cases in which Indigenous peoples have been divided by State borders, where it is their right to aspire to circulate freely in the territory of these bordering nations, in accordance with their situations.

In any case, territorial autonomy will imply not only decision-making in the case of natural and economic resource use but also in political and cultural self-determination, in the framework of a self-determination compatible with and complementary to the sovereignty of national States. ♣

Rio de Janeiro, December 10, 1993.

The full text of this declaration is available upon request from SAIC, or can be found in the SAIC conference (SAIC.indio) on Peacenet.

Ecuador: Second Indigenous Uprising Secures Concessions on Agrarian Reform

by Robert Andolina

This June, international observers were once again stunned by the Ecuadorian Indigenous movement's capacity to mobilize masses of supporters to defend the interests of this country's Indigenous population. In a mobilization reminiscent of the landmark uprising in 1990, Indigenous organizations nationwide blocked the country's roads and highways, in order to prevent implementation of a new "Law for Agricultural Development" enacted by the government as part of its structural adjustment program. For a two-week period, commerce throughout Ecuador ground practically to a halt. As with the uprising four years ago, Indigenous organizations paralyzed much of the country, endured military repression, forcing the government into negotiations, and finally emerging with significant governmental concessions in hand.

Over 3,500 Indigenous communities as well as campesino and popular organizations mobilized under the leadership of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) the National Ecuadorian Federation of Campesino and Indigenous Organizations (FENOC-I), and the Evangelical Federation of Indigenous Ecuadorians (EFIE). Over the course of two weeks, at least five Indigenous activists were killed and many more were hospitalized, mostly from gun shot wounds. An unknown number were jailed.

Parties from throughout the political spectrum have debated reform of the country's outdated agrarian laws for years. On May 18, the conservative Social Christian Party (PSC) forced a radically new agrarian

bill through congress. Over the objections of CONAIE and other popular organizations, President Sixto Durán Ballen signed the bill into law on June 13.

Indigenous organizations rejected numerous aspects of this law that either ignored or threatened interests of Indigenous agricultural communities, as well as those of 90% of the rural population. The law would have encouraged the disappearance of Indigenous communal lands in order to promote formation of agricultural "enterprises." Rodrigo Carrillo, member of the press commission for the Indigenous Movement of Chimborazo (MICH) explained, "You cannot simply convert Indigenous communal production into agricultural businesses. This law imposes a vision of agriculture that doesn't fit within Indigenous thought and practice."

Indigenous organizations were outraged not only by the law's content but by the undemocratic and unconstitutional methods used by the Social Christian Party to railroad it through congress. The National Agrarian Commission (CAN), formed by CONAIE and other Indigenous peasant organizations, had drafted (over a period of two years) a detailed proposal for reform of the nation's agrarian laws and had submitted it to the legislature for consideration. The President and the legislature completely ignored this project.

In addition, the PSC failed to submit the proposed law to each member of congress for consideration at least 15 days prior to passage, as required by law. CONAIE criticized the politicians for disobeying the fundamental laws of the land, for excluding the interests and participation of Indigenous people in the development of the law, and for their refusal to develop a law of national consensus instead of one that serves the

interests of a small, wealthy sector of the population.

For all of these reasons, CONAIE convened an emergency assembly on June 7 and 8 to prepare for a national "Movilización por la Vida" (Mobilization for Life) to protest the law if it were to go into effect. CONAIE released a resolution calling for repeal of the Agrarian Development law. The resolution addressed other issues, to stop unrestrained oil exploration and persecution of Indigenous leaders among other demands. Fundamentally, however, the mobilization was called to protest the PSC's Agrarian Law.

Ecuador Paralyzed

On June 13, President Durán signed the Agrarian bill into law. Indigenous protestors converged on strategic points, building roadblocks that paralyzed much of the country. Demonstrations in urban areas and occupations of public buildings also took place. Ten provinces in all were heavily affected. Despite the government and mass media's distortion of events, protestors remained firm in the streets and the blockades were very effective. Alberto Saeteros, Secretary of the Provincial Union of Cooperatives and Indigenous Communities of Cañar (UPCCC) stated, "Here in Cañar we met with the people in the communities to explain to them the negative effects of the law, and we then went out to paralyze traffic to the north, south, and west." Ignacio Grefa, President of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo (FOIN) reported, "We maintained the roadblock for a week—nothing got through."

Non-Indigenous campesinos, workers and some urban citizens expressed considerable solidarity for the mobilization and

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Indigenous Community Center Destroyed

During the "Mobilization for Life," a major community center belonging to the Union of Cooperatives and Indigenous Communities of Cañar Province (UPCCC) was attacked and burned to the ground. The UPCCC is Cañar's regional Indigenous organization and is affiliated with CONAIE. The following are excerpts from an interview with UPCCC Secretary General Alberto Saeteros.

Photo: Robert Andolina



Why did the attack take place? Who was involved?

-As you know, we participated fully in the mobilization called by CONAIE in opposition to the recently passed Agrarian Development Law. This law was not only illegal, but also threatened the interests of Indigenous people.

We cut the area off by blocking the main highways. Because we were winning in the struggle, the followers of Jaime Nebot and the PSC (Social Christian Party) decided in desperation to attack us. It wasn't just because of the mobilization, but also because of our alternative market which cut the "middleman" out of the sale of our products. We were, therefore, competing with the speculators living in the area, many of whom are Nebot supporters. Additionally, we were attacked because of long-standing racism against Indigenous people.

What happened during the attack itself?

-The attack was carefully orchestrated by a relatively small group of people; the general population was not against us, nor were we against them. This small group told all sorts of lies in order to make us look bad and to justify what they did. We never attacked the mar-

kets, nor poisoned the water like they claimed.

The attack itself was very violent. They came with pistols, homemade cannons, and tear gas. One of our activists, Manuel Mesías Yupa Yupa died from a bullet wound to the head. We also had 38 injuries and a number of disappearances. Many people are still unaccounted for. The community center was sacked and burned.

What did the police and military do during the attack?

-They did almost nothing to prevent or inhibit the attack. Moreover, the military shut down our radio station which made it difficult for us to communicate with the people, to tell them what was happening. Indigenous leaders have been pursued and in some cases jailed. Right now we are conducting investigations into the action of the police and military during the attack and during the mobilization as a whole.

What was damaged during the attack?

-Everything. Nothing was left untouched. The damage total has exceeded 10 billion sucres (\$5 million).

UPCCC has argued that the government is in part responsible for the

damages, and you have demanded that the government offer compensation. Have you received any financial help from the state?

-No. We haven't received a cent.

And from other sources?

-A little. Some popular sectors have offered assistance both in terms of money and labor to help us rebuild. We have a couple of new machines in the carpentry center, and we should have a new FAX machine soon. But as you can see, this is a very small part of the rebuilding that needs to be done. For this reason, we are calling on our allies and sympathizers here in Ecuador and in the international community to show their solidarity by sending us financial support so that we can rebuild our office and community center. Many people here will benefit if we can rebuild.

Do you have any final comments?

This attack was motivated by a desire on our enemies part to break the will of the Indigenous leadership and the movement here in Cañar. Although our office is destroyed, our determination is not. We will continue with our struggle. In fact, we are more determined and unified than ever.

offered their support. Left and center-left political parties demanded the Agrarian law be revoked. Hector Villamil, President of the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP) noted, "Some *campesinos* and workers mobilized with us. We see this as a positive and significant change. In the 1992 OPIP March on Quito many *campesino-colonists* reacted against us." According to Rodrigo Carrillo of MICH, "In general, the people of Riobamba (capital of Chimborazo province) understood the important role of Indigenous producers in the supply of staple foods and offered us help during the mobilization."

Military Counter-Mobilization

A week after the mobilization began, President Durán offered to negotiate. CONAIE, however, found the president's mediation commission unacceptable, stating that its representation was heavily weighted in favor of the government and the landowners.

The following day, President Durán declared a military "State of Mobilization," and decreed that blockaders would receive one to three year jail terms. Arrest warrants were issued for Indigenous leaders, including the CONAIE leadership. Highways and Indigenous communities were occupied by the security forces. Although protestors abandoned highways peacefully when the military arrived, several were killed and dozens or possibly hundreds were injured.

Police savagely beat protestors, including children, in the provinces of Cotopaxi and Chimborazo. In what was perhaps the Mobilization's worst moment, a mob of Social Christian Party supporters attacked and destroyed the office and community center of the UPCCC in Cañar. The community center served to support alternative form of education, commerce and medicine more suited to the needs of Cañar's Indigenous and poor peoples. One Indigenous activist was killed and thirty-eight injured in the attack, which also reduced a market, carpentry center, library, computer center, radio station, fax and photocopy machines, and several vehicles to ashes (see accompanying interview).

Security forces also threatened or shut down Indigenous and popular radio stations in Tungurahua, Cotopaxi, Chimborazo, and Cañar, making it difficult for activists to transmit news to the population at large regarding human rights violations and violence perpetrated by the military and para-military forces.

Fortunately, the military was more restrained in some regions. Hector Villamil, president of OPIP, reported, "We in Pastaza are lucky not to have experienced repression this time. Before, we considered the military and police to be enemies, so we see this as a good sign. However, we denounce the repression that took place in other provinces, and for that we remain suspicious of the armed forces."

Commission For Dialogue Formed

CONAIE leaders in hiding called for an end to the militarization and organized a mediation commission composed of national and international religious and human rights representatives. Under considerable national and international pressure, the president agreed to lift the state of mobilization and agreed to a compromise on the committees formation. Congress also pledged to revise the agricultural law. Negotiations began on June 30 and continued into mid-July.

The Struggle's Results: Words or Substance?

The negotiations, like all those where actors with vastly different interests take part, were tortuously difficult. Perhaps in an effort to save face, President Durán, on the one hand hailed the dialogue as a success, while also stating that only words but not substance had changed. However, it is the nature of law-making that words are substance. The reformed law—which went into effect on Aug. 3—did include real improvements for Indigenous peoples, *campesinos* and Ecuadorian society in general. It will permit the maintenance of communitarian, cooperative, and small-holder forms of agrarian organization. The new state agrarian development agency will

include two representatives of Indigenous/peasant organizations on its executive council. Ownership of water will remain public, and more emphasis will be given to production of food for internal consumption to meet the needs of Ecuadorian society. It also recognizes Indigenous agricultural knowledge, and respects the cultural and social values of the various peoples who are involved in agricultural activities.

Importantly, the reformed law also calls for continuation and improvement of the agrarian reform, including land distribution, as well as increased access to credit, technical assistance, and better infrastructure. It demands the protection of national parks and reserves, and recognizes Indigenous peoples' rights to live from and manage forests. Finally, the law calls for the formation of markets that permit indigenous and peasant producers to cut out speculative middlemen.

Indigenous peoples gains in this mobilization go beyond these legal reforms. Again, the movement demonstrated its strength. This time, Indigenous people sat face to face at the bargaining table with those who used to be their "patrons" (landlords). As described by Rodrigo Carrillo of MICH, "The government now knows that it has to include the interests and participation of Indigenous people in the future. We are now recognized as thinking human beings with rights, not as lazy animals." Ignacio Grefa commented on the process, "We have won new political space and have fortified the space we earned in the 1990 uprising. In that sense this is just a continuation of that mobilization and of our struggle for the past 500 years. This struggle will continue in the future." 🐾

For additional information:

UPCCC, Correo Central Cañar, Cañar, Ecuador Fax: (593 7) 235 266

To contribute to the rebuilding of the UPCCC community center, please send Cashier's Checks made out to UPCCC, to:

CONAIE Av. de Los Granados 2553 y 6 de Diciembre Casilla 1717-1235El Batán, Quito Ecuador. Specify on the check that it is for UPCCC.

Original Nations and Bilateral agreements with the Bolivian Government

Governments and corporations across Latin America are turning to limited two-party agreements as a means to resolve conflicts with increasingly forceful Indigenous organizations. As experiences in Bolivia demonstrate, this "bilateralism" offers certain gains, but in the process challenges the Indian movement's unity and strength.

This year, SAIC received reports from Bolivia pointing out parallels between several conflicts that were settled through bilateral agreements between Indigenous organizations and the government. In large part, these are driven by the new assertiveness of Bolivia's National Secretary for Ethnic Affairs, which has taken a leadership role in brokering such agreements. The three cases below offer some interesting examples from three very different regions.

Guarani: Debt-peonage and Bilateral Commissions

Since our report on the Guarani of Mato Grosso do Sol, Brazil, in the last journal, the political conditions for the Guarani living on the Bolivian side of their territory have improved slightly. Within Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia and Argentina, the Guarani, remain one of the most tragic examples of systematic racial discrimination in the Americas: living as landless peasants within systems of debt-peonage. Suffering from poverty and repression, with a territory that is fragmented by the borders of four nation states, they have been unable to regroup and make their demands as a unified people.

Last year, national attention in Bolivia focused for a brief moment on the Guarani after press accounts that 10,000

Guarani were living under conditions of virtual slavery on the cattle ranches of the Gran Chaco. Among those cattle ranchers who have stolen Guarani lands and currently practice debt-peonage are several politicians of the the governing MNR party and of the opposition right-wing party. This year, a congressional investigation launched by Guarani congressman Silvio Aramayo and others in Bolivia's house of deputies found that the earlier estimate was extremely conservative, and that the actual number of Guarani living in debt-peonage is closer to 40,000.

The Guarani successfully mobilized on the heels of this publicity. Their largest organization, the Guarani Peoples Assembly, threatened to march on the capital if the government of Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada and Aymara Vice-President Cardenas did not respond to their demands of freedom for all enslaved workers and the return of ancestral territories. The government invited Guarani representatives to negotiate, and the march was deferred.

Three bilateral commissions composed of government representatives and Guarani delegates were formed as a result of this dialogue. Each aimed at solving one of the Guarani's key problems: land, labor, and political participation. Guarani

delegates Guido Chumiray, Erwin Cuellar and Marcelino Robles signed the preliminary agreement with representatives from the government's two "super-ministries" of Human Development and Sustainable Development, as well as those of minor ministries such as Ethnic Affairs. Guido Chumiray, stated: "When we implement the agreement to solve the concrete problems of land and labor, the Guarani people will hopefully regain territories and labor rights that belong to us. This is a not a favor given to us by the government. It is our right. We deserve it".

Indigenous Organizations Sign with Loggers in the Beni

Deforestation continues to spread across the Bolivian Amazon—at the rate of 80,000 hectares last year alone. In the northern Amazonian province of Beni, Indigenous organizations will finally expel three logging companies from the Multi-ethnic Indian Territory (TIM) within the Chimanes Forest region which stretches from the Andean foothills to the Beni's extensive savannahs. Mojeño, Movima, Yuracare and Chimane communities won a de jure entitlement to "sustainably manage" this region in 1991. This summer, the region's Indigenous federation, the Central de Pueblos Indigenas del Beni (CPIB), representing the region's

Indigenous communities signed an agreement with the Herval, CIMAGRO, and Montegrande, logging companies which will force companies to abandon the TIM by July, 1995. Paradoxically, Mr. Roberto Velasco, a cattle rancher and owner of Herval reportedly presented the agreement to be signed by CPIB, with the Secretary of Ethnic Affairs acting as broker. The companies and communities have been in a—at times armed—stand-off for years. Since title was granted to the Indigenous communities, logging companies have postponed the date of their departure from the TIM several times. Although calling for removal of the companies, the agreement is in effect, yet one more postponement—and one which will allow the companies to extract all the remaining valuable woods (mahogany in particular) from accesible areas.

CPIB President, Marcial Fabricano, noted, "We have to deal with clandestine loggers and chain-sawers who intimidate us with guns. This is one of the problems faced by our communities." He added that, "We are also now insisting in the recognition of our traditional authorities, for their acknowledgement would mean that the Bolivian nation indeed is a full democracy." Fabricano, however, remains skeptical. In 1990 CPIB led the "March for Territory and Dignity" from the Beni to La Paz. This was positively received, and achieved many governmental commitments, including establishment of the TIM. None of these, however, had any enforcement power.

Government and Uru Sign agreement to Improve their Habitat

The Bolivian government recently signed a bilateral agreement with the highland Uru Nation, of whom scarcely 2,000 remain. This agreement addresses the need to assist the Uru Nation in the

"upgrading of their habitat." Under the agreement, a study will be carried out of the ecological collapse affecting the Uru Nation and potential for governmental assistance to help them survive under better conditions. This agreement will also consider programs for land distribution programs. Traditional Uru-Murato authorities also requested the liberation of Uru Indians Paulino Flores, Rogelio Choque, Anacleto Garcia, Angelica Flores de Garcia and Justina Opida who have been accused of "environmental vandalism" for hunting flamingos that flock on lakes within their territory. Sadly, it seems easier to find Indians guilty of "environmental vandalism" than to arrest loggers whose blatantly illegal destruction of the Chimanes Forest goes far beyond mere vandalism.

Each of these bilateral agreements won small advances for Indigenous communities, as a whole, however; they may have functioned to undermine the strength of a coordinated Indigenous movement. Unfortunately, the movement has been unable to establish a position of bargaining power which would allow it to press

for "Territory and Dignity" for all Indigenous peoples. The government's new Secretary of Ethnic Affairs has contributed to this weakness, in its attempt to act as sole broker between Indigenous organizations and the government. Bolivian anthropologists have often followed the government's lead and contributed to establishing isolation rather than coordination.

Finally, there is widespread disappointment within the Indigenous movement with the performance of the Vice-president Victor Hugo Cardenas. His candidacy with the Katarista party raised expectations as he is the first Aymara Indian to reach such a high governmental post. He has, however, used his power to little or no effect since taking office. A handful of Aymara Kataristas have been appointed to government posts. Unfortunately, these few have made a series of racist statements against non-Indians which are of grave concern to the Indigenous movement. Although the vast majority in the movement do not share in these opinions, they already are suffering from the backlash they have generated. ❧



Logging companies have postponed departure from the Multi-ethnic Indigenous Territory long enough to remove thousands of giant mahogany trees like those pictured above.

Photo: David Tecklin

Organizing from Oaxaca to California

Interview with

Rufino Dominguez

This October, SAIIC had the opportunity to interview Rufino Dominguez, Secretary General of the Organization of Exploited and Oppressed Peoples and Sub-coordinator of the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front at his office in Fresno, California.

Along with Chiapas, the highland state of Oaxaca is one of Mexico's most Indigenous regions. The Mixteco people are one of the many Indigenous peoples living in Oaxaca; they have also immigrated to the North in larger numbers than any other Indigenous people in Mexico. This exodus has been driven by a number of factors common to many of Mexico's Indian groups.

Although Mixteco communities have secured legal recognition for communal land titles that predate the Mexican revolution, there is still insufficient land to go around. As in Chiapas, local *caciques* have consolidated ownership over the best lands. At the same time, years of deforestation has transformed much of the territory into near desert conditions. With insufficient land, and fewer opportunities for wage employment, a steady stream of Indigenous immigrants have left to look for work elsewhere. Thousands went to work in the fields further North, first in the states of Sinaloa, Veracruz, the Federal District, and Baja California and later in agricultural areas throughout the Western

United States. These migrants have often faced not only the exploitation commonly suffered by migrant farmworkers, but also discrimination for being Indian. The emergence and linking of Indian organizations throughout the path taken by this exodus is one of the most encouraging and intriguing examples of cross-border organizing in the Americas.

Rufino Dominguez grew up in Oaxaca's Mixteco territory, in the town of San Miguel Cuevas or, Nu-Yucu, which means on top of the mountain in his native language. He came to the US for the first time in 1964. Like many Indigenous immigrants, he has conserved much of his community's culture. Indigenous Oaxacan immigrants in the US generally keep contact with their communities at home. This is perhaps best exemplified by formation of the Indigenous Oaxacan Binational Front simultaneously in Oaxaca, Baja California and California (U.S.). SAIIC had the opportunity to interview Dominguez regarding his work with the Front in Oaxaca and the Central Valley of California.

Can you tell us about when the Mixtecos began to immigrate, and then later, to organize?

-The first Mixtecos began to immigrate in small numbers in the 1960s, but it wasn't until the period known as "the braceros" in the 1980s when we started immigrating as entire families, and in large numbers. When we arrived, we worked in the fields in Oregon, Washington and Alaska. We Mixtecos have mostly engaged in field work.

The truth is that we began to organize ourselves back in our communities [in Oaxaca], because there were so many injustices there and the authorities abused many of our people. The authorities then began to kill and threaten our leaders, burned several houses and all that. They also imprisoned many of our people. This was in 1981-83. Thus, we organized ourselves and it took us one year to remove those authorities from office.

So those who came here already had experiences in organizing at home in Oaxaca?

-Yes, but back in our communities, our organization didn't have a name. We were just a community committee. Then, I moved to Sinaloa after having won the battle with those people. My companions in Sinaloa had asked me to help organize an assembly. They thought it necessary to name the organization and continue fighting, and that in this way, our actions could serve the community in at home.

What did you call the organization?

-The Organization of Exploited and Oppressed People. That was the majority's choice. They said that we are exploited by the economic situation, and oppressed by the rich.

What's the relationship between the Organization of Exploited and Oppressed Peoples and the Indigenous Oaxacan Binational Front?

-Well, the Front is an umbrella group of many organizations.

What are its objectives?

-At the organizational level, our objective is to incorporate all the Indigenous organizations that agree with our principles and our program of action. And our objective is to fight for justice for all the Indigenous communities of Oaxaca—because we have learned that if we are organized, the governments have to pay attention to us—and if we are not, they pay no attention to us.

Here in the U.S., the Front is involved in labor organizing, in denouncing racism against Indigenous people—not just of white americans, but of other latinos as well—in denouncing Governor Wilson's anti-immigrant attacks and in uniting with other latino organizations to oppose the racist ballot measures [in California's Nov. elections]. We also work with our members to help them get citizenship and enter the country's political system. We



Photo: Courtesy of OPEO

The Organization of Exploited and Oppressed Peoples: 500 years of Mixteco Resistance.

have 15-20,000 members in California. We also support the Front's activism in Oaxaca by pressuring the Mexican consulates here. There, the Front works for to get land, basic services in the communities; for potable water, clinics, electricity, schools. We have also entered into agreements with the Federal and State governments to promote small businesses in the communities.

Indigenous peoples throughout the continent have a tendency toward autonomy and self-determination. Do the Mixteco people have aspirations to govern yourselves in this way?

-Of course. We all need common objectives. It's vital for us to struggle for autonomy—because unfortunately the Mixteco communities are not currently autonomous. It's important to struggle for the autonomy of our community's customs because these are currently threatened at their roots.

We heard that the Front's organizations met in Tijuana this past month, what happened there?

-The meeting was for all Indigenous Oaxaqueños in exile. We met to change the organization's name, because new members were entering who speak different languages. Before, we were called the Zapoteco-Mixteco Binational Front, but it turned out that Oaxaca has more than 16 Indigenous peoples. Our brothers, the Triquis, Mexes and others groups who had asked to, joined the Front. We now include five Indigenous peoples, and renamed the organization the Indigenous Oaxacan Binational Front.

We also decided at the meeting to continue the campaign against [Governor] Wilson's racism, reformed our basic articles, named new officers and established committees of coordination for each region.

However, before the meeting, which took place on Sept. 3, the PAN (the right-of-center National Action Party) governor Ernesto Rufo repressed a march or ours which was coming from San Quintin to Mexicali. They were demanding that wages be increased to a just level, dignified housing, rural clinics and the introduction of potable water to San Quintin.

And the government's response?

-Several protestors were imprisoned; more than 32 comrades went to jail.



Rufino Dominguez (center) Signing agreements of mutual respect with the UFW.

Thirty were wounded. This was an awful response from the government; nevertheless, we were not deterred. We returned to regroup and the government accepted negotiations. Two days later, the government met all our demands except that for a higher minimum wage, which, they claimed was under the federal government's jurisdiction. Thanks to the international community's intervention, we also won release of all our prisoners.

[Many thanks to all those who wrote letters in support of the imprisoned protestors, your letters were critical in securing their safe release, eds.]

You have said that the PAN did this in Baja California, but doesn't the PRI do the same in Oaxaca?

-Actually, the Party has never taken that attitude toward the Front.

So, what do you think of the PRI?

- I totally repudiate that party. It has done nothing to bring the Indigenous communities out of their misery. It isn't capable of curing a single Indigenous child. I don't see the PRI as an option for Mexico. Speaking of the last election, I know the PRI's tactics in the rural areas, and they are expert in maintaining power because they have a giant [political] machine. There was lots of manipulation and lots of money exchanged for votes.

The National Solidarity Program paid *campesinos* so that they would vote for the PRI. But, we know that this won't bring us out of the misery. This only happens during the elections. There was also lots of bad information—many attempts to discredit the opposition parties.

Are there any parties whose platforms include Indigenous peoples' rights to a dignified life, to autonomy and self-determination?

-They do it in a very partial, intellectual and *campesino* form. We don't believe it should be this way. Rather, they should

include us, as the Indigenous activists, to give our point of view regarding our autonomy, and what we really want.

Is this *campesino* (or peasant oriented) approach a result of the first Zapatista revolution, the revolution of 1917?

-The [revolutions of] 1910 and 1917 had no effect in the Indigenous communities. I say this because we have seen no changes. To the contrary, there was more racism and discrimination toward the Indigenous people. We are finally seeing change now, with the uprising by the Zapatista National Liberation Army in Chiapas. They have provoked a change at the national level. Now there is talk of autonomy for the Indigenous peoples, there is talk of education, people are talking—but these are demands that I doubt the government will comply with. Definitely, the previous revolutions did not benefit the Indigenous communities.

Do you think that the Zapatista positions go beyond a merely a *campesinista* position?

-Definitely, they are very much in agreement with the Indigenous struggles objectives, because they truly take into account Indigenous people's necessities. No other political party has taken this position. Their platform of armed struggle

includes the necessities of the Indigenous peoples.

What about conditions here in California? Have things gotten any better?

-No there have been no changes. The farmworker continues to be exploited. They are not paid minimum wage. They work many hours without the right to rest 10 minutes. Women are sexually abused. The contractors and landowners rush the workers to do more than than human beings are capable of.

Is the Front affiliated with any union?

We're not affiliated. Just one year ago, we signed an agreement of respect with Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers of America. This is, however, nothing more than an agreement of respect and cooperation.

How do you see Indigenous unity in Mexico and at the continental level? Has there been progress in these last few years in organization, communication and solidarity?

-At the organizational level, I believe we still have a lot to do in Mexico. There are a great number of Indigenous organizations, and we haven't united. It's the same at the continental level. We need to get better organized, to strengthen the coordination between the Indigenous organizations if that's possible. Even though it's true that we have some organizations that are already very well connected, still we have a lot to do. In relation to communication, only the most important organizations have good communications, and the others have nothing.

With SAIC I have seen that there is more communication, not just at the continental level, but worldwide. And I think that is where we should focus ourselves. Our objective is to strengthen this communication at the continental and global level between all the organizations. 🐾

For More information, contact:
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Update on Chiapas

August 6-9, the National Democratic Convention (CND), organized by the EZLN in Aguascalientes, Chiapas, emerged as one of the most significant political gatherings in modern Mexican history. Six thousand delegates from all over Mexico attended. The central theme was the "transition to democracy." Several local, regional and national Indigenous organizations participated (see article below). Most were not entirely satisfied with either the CND's structure or results, but have chosen to continue participating.

October 8, the Zapatista National Liberation Army broke off negotiations with the government, stating that the Salinas administration was not acting in good faith, and was preparing a military assault. The EZLN also claimed to have mined the roads leading to their territory.

October 10, peace mediator, Bishop Samuel Ruiz expressed "grave" concern regarding the tensions in the state, and called on both sides to maintain the cease-fire and return to the negotiating table.

October 12, the CND reconvened in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. With the support of thousands of local Indigenous supporters, the CND then symbolically and peacefully took over the town. The convention declared itself in permanent session, stating that a civil insurgency is necessary in order to topple the PRI from power. The CND also called for nation-wide mobilization on Nov. 5, to prevent President-elect Ernesto Zedillo from taking office.



Photo: Carlos Contreras

The EZLN has maintained a presence in Chiapas's principal city, San Cristobal de las Casas: mini Zapatistas for sale.

Six Principles for a New Mexican State

The following article is based on a proposal titled "Six Principles and Six Proposals" written by the Independent Indian Peoples Front (FIPI)

and the Committee for the Support and Defense of Indian Rights (CADDIAC). After extensive consultations with Indigenous organizations, FIPI con-

tributed this document to the working roundtables established at the National Democratic Convention. Although written for Mexico, the analysis could apply

to the other Latin American states who conceive themselves to be mestizo.

I. An end to the "Mestizo-cratic" state

In Mexico, ethnic homogeneity was considered a necessary precondition in the creation of the nation-state, and in consolidation of a market economy. Indigenous peoples have therefore been subject to hostile policies, ranging from physical extermination to "Indigenista" strategies whose aim has been to assimilate us. As a result, we have not had, as Indigenous peoples, a dignified place in Mexican society. Not only has our right to exist as a collective entity been denied, but also our rights as a peoples. Today, we continue living under a neocolonial oppression promoted by the State and perpetuated by mestizo people who ben-

efit from this situation. They, in turn, believe themselves to be the synthesis of the Mexican people, the embodiment of the nation, and to have created a State in their image and likeness; that is to say, a "mestizo-cratic" State. Thus, by the light of contemporary morality, the position of the Mexican State and the mestizo peoples is illegitimate: both are based upon the displacement and the abrogation of the rights of Indigenous peoples, and upon excluding us from collective participation in the nation and the state, which has bound us in a neocolonial relationship.

II. Revise the constitution to serve as the foundation for a new, democratic, multi-national, and popular state

The constitution is a key source of the

problems we face, and thus must be modified. It was modified in 1992 in a way that was both limited and has not been enforced. Additions to Article Four recognize the plurality of the Mexican nation, but this plurality is not reflected in the State, which should be structured in order to reflect this fact.

This problem is compounded by the fact that Indigenous rights are located under Article Four, which guarantees individual freedoms, rather than within the constitution's principal articles (articles 39, 40, and 41, which have to do with sovereignty and the forms of government, and articles 115 to 122, which establish the basis for our federal structure). The location of our rights under Article Four signifies the government's refusal to recognize our collective rights as distinct peoples, recognizing only our

Photo: Carlos Contreras



Looking toward the National Democratic Convention.

individual rights. This is a fundamental and significant difference, as it is not the same thing at all to recognize that Mexico is a multiethnic nation as it is to recognize that Mexico is a multinational state. This is why the central project is to divest the constitution of its "mestizo-cracic" cast.

III. Building a new federalism on the basis of a new understanding of territory

The ideal of federalism—for which thousands of citizens, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have struggled—has not been realized in our country. From the very beginnings of the Republic, the Mexican people agreed to constitute a federation; however, in practice our government has been centralist, subject to an overly powerful presidency and to the domination of the State by one party, leading in effect to a dictatorship. In order to fulfill the precepts of federalism, it is necessary to redefine the notion that through federation we shall "unify our diversity". Although this is a valid concept, it does not acknowledge nor include the continued presence of distinctive peoples within a federation.

Thus indigenous peoples are left out of the federal structure of our country. Some of the worst consequences of this exclusion are found in the territorial reorganizations which decisively and negatively impacted the social organization of the original peoples of this land. From that moment to the present, Indigenous territories have been continuously divided. The federalist policies did not take into account the preexisting territories nor acknowledge them as a basis for a re-organization. Instead, they were deeply genocidal, placing Indigenous regions under the tutelage of the "Indigenista" arm of the government. Today the few remaining Indigenous territories face new threats. The land redistribution that took place throughout the country based on an ejido concept of occupancy, instead of on a communitarian basis, has greatly

affected the territorial rights of Indigenous peoples. In many cases, the ejido continues to function in a destructive and assimilationist manner in Indigenous territories. The new reforms to Article 27 constitute a final blow towards the dismemberment of Indigenous territories.

IV. Democracy for Indigenous peoples: only within the context of a democratic nation

Justice will prevail for indigenous peoples only if there is democracy in the rest of the country. And democracy can exist only if governments are created that are respectful of diversity and able to share power, not only with different political parties but also with different ethnic groups. As Indigenous peoples we have often been denied the vote and been prevented both from choosing our own legitimate representatives as well as from exercising our right to represent others. As Indigenous peoples, we add our voices to the national clamor for democracy, yet we add that no democracy will be a true democracy if it does not resolve the anti-democratic relationship between Indigenous people and the power of the state, as exemplified in our ability to participate and be represented in the structures of government.

V. Towards a new covenant between Mexicans

The road towards democracy must necessarily take us through a process of democratizing the relationships between Indians and non-Indians. It is urgent that as Mexicans we reach a new national accord, a new social covenant that is based on a new ethic of tolerance and respect towards diversity and plurality that will allow us to live together in peace. But this pact cannot rest only upon individual efforts or moral values; we believe that it must be affirmed by our Constitution. The State must address this covenant by creating the foundation for a democratic relationship between the State itself and the Mexican people; between

the state and the Indigenous peoples; between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; between the federation and the elements thereof; between the capital and the provinces; between the provinces and the Indigenous regions, etc.

VI. A transitional government: towards a multinational state

It is not possible in this day and age to defend an ethnocentric nation-state. As we seek to give power to the people, we are led to question the legitimacy of the mestizo population being the sole holders of that power. The need for a transitional government means that we need to create a new national model that is no longer an ethnocentric nation-state, but instead a multi-national state. The creation of a truly multi-national state implies the acknowledgment of the free self-determination of Indigenous peoples, and the embodiment of those rights through the creation of autonomous regions.

Six Proposals

Included within the six proposals are:

- 1) the constitutional recognition of Indigenous autonomy through the formation of "Autonomous Pluriethnic Regions";
- 2) an addition to Article 42, and
- 3) to Article 43 of a section guaranteeing the existence of the Autonomous Indigenous Regions;
- 4) reforms to Article 115 to acknowledge the Autonomous Indigenous Regions (referred to as Pluriethnic Regions) as fundamental elements of the political and administrative structure of the country;
- 5) modifications to Article 73 and
- 6) modifications to Articles 52, 53, 54, 55, and 56, which refer to political participation, in order to redraw electoral districts in Indigenous regions. In this way, a sixth district will be drawn to provide for election of Indigenous congressmen and guarantee the presence of six Indigenous senators. 🐾

The Convention on Biological Diversity:

An Imperative for Indigenous Participation

The Biodiversity Convention, one of the world's most important pieces of environmental legislation, will be finalized at the end of this year. Whether it will provide tools to defend Indigenous bio-cultural resources remains unclear.

By Alejandro Argumedo

At the 1992 U.N. "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, over 150 governments signed the International Convention on Biological Diversity (Biodiversity Convention), which, came into force last December after the required ratification by more than thirty national legislatures. After two-and-a-half years of negotiations, the Conference of Parties (COP) which was established as the Convention's governing body will meet for the first time from Nov. 28 to Dec. 9 in the Bahamas to further define the treaty's implementation. The Convention has yet to establish the scope and nature of Indigenous peoples' rights to their bio-cultural resources. Thus, this meeting will either help ascertain native rights, or function as yet another international mechanism to legitimate the theft of Indian resources.

The Convention is the first global agreement committing signatory nations to comprehensive protection of Mother Earth's biological gifts. Provisions stipulating specific commitment towards achieving this goal are covered in forty-two legally-binding articles. This legal instrument addresses issues of tremendous significance for the world's Indigenous peoples.

Alejandro Argumedo is Quechua from Peru, a SAIC board member and Director of Cultural Survival Canada.

Biodiversity and Indigenous Land

Up to the nineteenth century, Indigenous peoples exercised de facto control over most of the world's ecosystems. Today, only an estimated 12-19% of the earth's land area is home to the four to five thousand Indigenous nations of the world. Even diminished to a mere fragment of what they were, our homelands constitute an important portion of the globe's relatively intact ecosystems, and shelter an even larger share of its biological diversity. It is no coincidence that the habitats richest in natural diversity are usually home to Indigenous people as well. By some estimates, Indigenous homelands shelter more endangered plant and animal species than all the world's "nature reserves" combined.

Through millennia we have depended on the diversity of life around us; uncovering its secrets, and learning how to increase these riches, for example, when we create new genetic diversity within a species. We possess a knowledge that is not only innovative and cognizant of ecological processes and uses of biodiversity, but also uniquely holistic for its spiritual and ethical components. That is why the conservation of all components of biodiversity—genetic, species and ecosystems—is crucial for our survival as cultures of the land. For Indigenous peoples biodiversity means just that: the land. The recognition of inherent rights to our tra-

ditional territories is the foundation both for our survival as peoples and for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and its components. In this context the Biodiversity Convention could provide an important mechanism to protect Indigenous Peoples' rights over biological resources.

The Convention: a Significant but Flawed Tool

Disturbingly, there has been little participation by Indigenous people in developing the Convention. As usual, we have been viewed as the objects (another endangered species) rather than subjects of the process. Most Indigenous people know little, if anything, about the Convention. However, the treaty does recognize our contributions to biodiversity conservation. In addition, appreciation of our "use of the medicinal, agricultural, and other useful properties of endemic flora and fauna" is increasing.

Nonetheless, parties to the Convention are now meeting behind closed doors to determine what rights we will have over our knowledge, innovations and practices, for which we currently lack any legal instruments of protection. Bio-cultural pirates are currently plundering these resources without prior informed consent of Indigenous communities and organizations. Free access for free value is the common practice. For the first time,

provisions of the Biodiversity Convention may offer opportunities to effectively protect rights to biocultural resources.

With the increasing focus on Indigenous territories as reserves of genetic diversity for use in the food, agriculture, pharmaceutical, biotechnology and other industries, Indigenous peoples presence in the Convention's development is crucial. The Indigenous Peoples' Biodiversity Network (IPBN), a global coalition of Indigenous peoples' organizations formed to protect biocultural resources, has been lobbying for Indigenous peoples' rights within the Convention. In order to promote greater Indigenous influence within the treaty, the IPBN, SAIC and the Abya Yala Fund, an Indigenous foundation that supports Indigenous-based sustainable development in the Latin America, are jointly working to facilitate increased participation of Indigenous peoples from South and Meso America. We need to monitor, analyze, and seek greater transparency and accountability from all parties, in addition to promoting policies that protect our local rights and interests.

The Convention's value lies in the commitment of signatory nations to work for a common cause. It also supports national sovereignty and each country's right to benefit from its own biological resources. It further specifies that each country should have access rights to new technologies, including new biotechnologies, which could assist in conservation efforts or prove useful in the exploitation of biological resources.

The Convention does not recognize Indigenous peoples' rights over their traditional territories and resources. But it does recognize the importance of our cultures' survival to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. It also recognizes that first nations should share in the benefits derived from their knowledge and innovations. Unfortunately, the Convention's provisions leave it up to national governments to decide the scope and nature of Indigenous peoples' rights. Currently, few colonial nation-states recog-



Photo: Alfonso Jaramillo

Potato crop diversity developed alongside Andean cultures in the Altiplano region, where hundreds of varieties can be found in local markets.

nize Indigenous land rights or rights to customary practices on the land (biodiversity). Inserting these adequately into the treaty is a serious challenge for the signatory members of the Convention, and will be a tough fight for the Indigenous peoples working within the process. The Convention's existing mandates can be grouped into several broad categories, these are briefly summarized below.

National Action Plans and Environmental Impact Assessments

One of the Convention's central mandates is to ensure adequate planning and decision-making to protect biodiversity at the national level. Each country will be required to formulate a national action plan for biodiversity protection. Indigenous organizations should participate in designing these plans because new policies will affect their communities the most. Implementation of these plans, is of course, another matter, and Indigenous organizations will have to monitor this process as well. Secondly for all individual projects "likely to have significant adverse impacts on [biodiversity]" governments will be required to develop

Environmental Impact Assessments. This Article may provide Indigenous peoples with a forum—which they have often been lacking—for voicing opposition to senseless "mega-development" projects that affect their human and territorial rights, such as the construction of hydroelectric dams, highways, tourist resorts, mining, oil exploration and exploitation, and logging.

Protection

In terms of concrete protective measures, the Convention has three requirements: control sources of significant injury to biodiversity, establish systems of protected natural areas, develop and implement policies for in situ conservation. Indigenous participation is critical both in designing protected areas and in managing them. First, because Indigenous communities often have extensive knowledge regarding the landscapes at stake. Second to ensure that these actions are complimentary and compatible with pre-existing Indigenous land rights, rather than—as we have seen in some previous cases—an attempt to circumvent them.

The Convention specifically recommends the application of traditional knowledge and conservation practices. This is a very valuable recognition of Indigenous practices, Indigenous organizations will have to be proactive in the implementation, financing and monitoring of these measures.

Research and Indian Lands

In addition to protecting biodiversity, the Convention is supposed to promote sustainable use of biological resources through government/private sector cooperation. In the past, such bilateral cooperation has nearly always sidestepped Indigenous participation (e.g. "Texaco & Ecuadorian Government Settlement" on pg. 4, eds.) The Convention continues to favor bilateral rather than multilateral agreements. Multilateral agreements are more favorable for Indigenous organizations; these are more transparent and involve a range of concerned sectors who can act as our allies, support our rights, and help to monitor the agreement. Indigenous peoples' organizations should consider multilateral agreements for decisions affecting biodiversity in their territories.

Identification and Monitoring of Priorities and Problems

Parties to the Convention are required to identify priority ecosystems, species, and genomes for conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. These priority areas will largely be congruent with Indigenous territories, and Indigenous communities could benefit from research activities that help to ascertain territorial rights (e.g. ecosystem research). Since the Convention recognizes the merits of Indigenous knowledge in relation to biodiversity, Indigenous peoples should participate in this research as equals with Western researchers.

In addition to biodiversity identification, parties are required to monitor the status of their country's biodiversity resources. Here, in particular, Indigenous knowledge has a critical role. In many instances, Indigenous knowledge can provide more

reliable biodiversity indicators than science. Monitoring the status of ecosystem and species can be done by Indigenous peoples along with scientists if the integrity, and rights to our knowledge is respected and protected.

At the same time, parties to the Convention are supposed to identify and monitor activities that are likely to have significant adverse impacts on biodiversity. In

al action plan should include the following economic activities in their list of harmful processes requiring monitoring and mitigation: mining, oil exploration, agribusiness, commercial logging and cattle ranching.

Financing

The Convention mandates the industrialized countries to provide developing countries with new and additional funds to meet its implementation costs. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was chosen as the Convention's interim financing mechanism. The parties will select the permanent mechanism at this meeting in Nov. and Dec.

Institutional Structure And Intergovernmental process

At the international level, parties to the Convention will meet regularly in a Conference of the Parties (COP). A Secretariat will provide administrative services. An interim Secretariat has been established in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition, a scientific and technological advisory committee will give technical assistance to the COP. At the COP, parties will report on compliance and consider measures for strengthening the treaty. They will also address, among other issues: a) administering the financing of arrangements under the treaty; b) setting up a clearinghouse of information on technology transfer and other areas; c) establishing cooperative partnerships on research, information sharing, and technology transfer. ♻️



Photo: David Tecklin

Chimane farmer shows just one of the several hundred different domesticated and semi-domesticated plant species he cultivates—a local variety of peanuts.

many countries Indigenous organizations are the first to identify and denounce large-scale environmental impacts (see for example Vol. 8:1&2, Oil exploration in Peru, eds.). Parties should provide Indigenous groups with resources for in-depth and continuous monitoring of harmful activities in their regions. In addition, every nation-

For further information on the Biodiversity Convention and Indigenous issues please contact the following:

M.s Angela Cropper, Executive Secretary Convention on Biological Diversity
15 Chemin des Anemores CP 356 CH-1219
Chatelaine Geneva, Switzerland
Tel: (41-22)979-9111 Fax: (41-22)979-2512

The Abya Yala Fund
PO. Box 28386 Oakland, CA, USA
Tel: (510) 834-4263 Fax: (510) 834 4264

Indigenous Peoples' Biodiversity Network
620, 1 Nicholas St, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 7B7
Tel: (613) 241 4500 Fax: (613) 241-2292

Continued from page 9

struggled untiringly for the establishment of a commission to verify boundaries between communal and individual property; between canton, provincial, and departmental jurisdictions; and international borders. This movement had a vast and extensive organization which included the Guarani people in the form of their Captain Casiano Barrientos as well as leaders of the Indigenous people of Tarija and Beni.

The Bolivian state could not tolerate an autonomous Indian Movement with such extensive organizational capacity, especially since Eduardo Nina Qhispi, one of its boldest leaders, favored the "Renewal of Bolivia" and to that end declared himself President of the Republic of Qullasuyu, creating a parallel Indian state (He was imprisoned by President Salamanca from 1932-36). Thus, in 1945, the government of President Villarroel, in which the MNR formed one part, moved to co-opt Indian organizations. The government organized an Indigenous Congress in which the legitimate leaders of the movement were thrown out by security forces. After the triumph of the revolution, the MNR (with the experience of 1945) rapidly engaged in organizing campesinos into a National Federation of Campesinos. Nuflo Chávez Ortiz, a descendent of the founder of Bolivia's second largest city, was placed in charge. This effort ushered in an era of *pongueaje político*, or political patronage, which has endured until today. This system guarantees Indian bondage to the benefit of the Party and the State.

Nevertheless, the political control which the MNR and the Bolivian State exercised over Indian groups could not last forever. In the mid-1960s Indigenous groups arose, seeking to reclaim their traditional forms of organization and to develop their own ideology. The traditional system of control founded in 1952 was also battered by other pressure groups. Among these, the military with its own attempt at peasant co-optation through a military-campesino pact, and the Leftist Revolutionary Movement (MIR) with its call for independent labor organizations figured largely.

Thus, an energetic Indian Movement re-

emerged in the 1970s. This movement exposed the nature of colonial domination and sought to develop an alliance between the different Indigenous nationalities in the country. All of the mainstream parties immediately labeled this emerging Indian Movement "racist." The Katarista parties, supported as they were by the church and the MIR, also condemned the Indianist position, the recognition of ethnic differences, and the use of native languages, and were obliged to testify for a "Bolivian" national identity.

The 1980s witnessed the Indian movement's premature collapse, weighed down by *caudillismo* (strong individual leaders who manipulated organizations for their own benefit), corruption, and internal divisions. The movement's ideological consistency and institutions could not resist the power (and violence), financial resources, and the privileges (congressional seats, government jobs, or cash) of the traditional parties which, for the sake of capturing Indigenous votes, incorporated Indian cadres into their circles.

By the 1990s, Indigenous political institutions were practically destroyed, barely leaving behind acronyms and their corresponding *caudillos*. Finally, the 1993 elections resulted in an auctioning off of Indian parties.

At the level of the national unions, the influential Aymara Genaro Flores was ousted as leader of the nation's largest rural union, the Single Confederate Syndicate of Peasant Workers of Bolivia (CSUTCB), and his MRTKL party divided. Thus, the *criollo* political parties fought to gain control over what remained of the Indigenous-campesino organization—viewing it as war booty.

This situation, although gloomy in its outlook, has given way to the strengthening of grassroots organizations in the Andes. In the *Oriente* (the upper Amazon Basin), however, the situation is very different and more closely resembles the organizational process of CONAIE in Ecuador. There, Indigenous organizing has always been closely tied to identity, and the Indian organizations have not taken up the *campesino* banner, as often occurred in the highlands.

Reconstructing Traditional Forms of Organization

In response to the traditions of political manipulation and Western "civilizing" syndicalism, Indigenous communities in the highlands are reconstructing Ayllu federations which maintain traditional structures although in segmentary fashion. Thus communities have begun reconstructing ancient identities which the Toledian reforms had destroyed centuries earlier. This movement grounds itself in the rights to territory—understood as physical space, the soil, subsoil; the place where families are rooted. According to Indigenous organizations, what lies within the boundaries of demarcated territories belongs to the community and not to the State. Their demands for rights to territory and the exploitation and administration of the resources contained within it, are based on titles granted by the Spanish Crown. The government's new laws, such as that for "popular participation" fail to recognize this concept, and therefore remain null.

In contrast to the rural unions, the Ayllu federations have reestablished traditional authorities as well as an autonomous administration of economic and social resources and of justice. Examples of this are organizations such as FASOR (the Federation of Ayllus to the South of Oruro) with respect to the Quillacas-Asanaques chiefdom, FAONP (the Federation of Ayllus to the North of Potosí) Jach'a Karangas which reconstituted the large Karangas in La Paz where FACOPI (the Federation of Ayllus and First Communities of the Province of Ingavi) revindicated their Pakaje origin, and more recently the formation of the Supreme Council of Bolivian Ayllus in the departments of La Paz, Oruro, and Potosí. FACOPI's Organic Statue is instructive, in the way it emphasizes the value of culture, history, and Indigenous language which constitute the basis for identity and self-determination.

The re-establishment of Indigenous language, culture, identity, territory, and sovereignty is the goal of the Indian movement, represented by a variety of grassroots organizations working for the rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples. ♣

Photo: SAIIC



Women from around the continent came to La Paz to build communication and plan future strategies

Strengthening the Network: Second Encounter of Indigenous Women from South, Central America and Mexico

The Executive Committee of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women of South and Central America (CIMI) met in La Paz, Bolivia, from July 4-6 of 1994 in preparation for the General Assembly that will take place in Mexico in August of 1995, and for the Fourth World Women's Conference of the United Nations in Beijing in 1995.

The meeting in La Paz was hosted by Centro de Discusion Ideologico de la Mujer Aymara (CDIMA) and attended by delegates from Guatemala, Panama, Mexico, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Peru, Argentina and a representative from the Coordinadora de Mujeres Indigenas de Bolivia (CMIB).

Background:

In August of 1990, the Sabmi Women's organizations from Norway organized an international Indigenous Women's Conference. At that event, women representatives from all countries in the American continent

were present and decided to call a meeting to set up a network of Indigenous Women from Mexico, Central and South America. The First Encounter of Indigenous Women from South and Central America took place in Lima, Peru, in March of 1991. At that meeting the Coordinating Body was formed.

This Encounter in La Paz was initiated with an Aymara-Quechua ceremony which is the Waxt'a, offer to the Pachamama (mother earth).

The committee affirmed the following broad objectives:

1. Promote permanent communication between existing Indigenous women's organizations in order to develop a network of solidarity at the national and international level.
2. Promote the exchange of cultural and organizational experiences between Indigenous women's organizations.
3. Establish relations with national and international organizations and participate actively to articulate, promote and project the demands of women and Indigenous peoples.

In order to achieve these objectives, the committee members established the regional bases for a continental communication and information dissemination network. These will be, the Council of Maya Organization of Guatemala, the Workshop of Kuna Women-Association of Napguana (Panama), the Foundation of Educational, Social and Economic Development FUNDASE (Guatemala); the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Women of Bolivia and the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (USA).

The CIMI issued a statement pointing out that eventhough there has been progress in terms of strengthening communication and women's participation in the organizations, there are still abuses against women like physical violence and basic rights, such as education, continue to be discriminatory.(...) The statement also points out that: "Neo-liberal policies of the Latin American governments are putting the Indian communities under more threats. Our territories and the Ecosystems will be more exploited and contaminated."(...)

Members of the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Women are planning to travel to the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing to organize a Workshop on the issue of domestic violence. ♡

For more information you can contact:

Sra. Maria Riquiac Morales
Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala - FUNDASE
10 Calle 5-21 Zona 1 CHICHICAS
Chimaltenango . GUATEMALA
Telefax : 502-9-561018

Fany Avila Eleta Taller de Mujeres Kuna
Apartado 536. Panama.
Rep. de Panama
Ph: 507-696525 Fax: 507-693514

You can also contact SAIIIC.

Drug Trafficking and Strip Searches Place Wayú Women in Peril

The following statement regarding "La Requisa Intima"—The Strip Search, was made by Dalla Durán of the Indigenous Movement for National Identity (MOIIN), and appeared in IWGIA.

The Wayú people have lived on Guajira Peninsula between Colombia and Venezuela since before the Spanish arrived on this continent. This coastal and semi-desert territory of vast planes is the home of our matrilineally organized society. Wayú women are the axis of this society; inheritance and the last name follow the mother's line. Women's presence and participation are fundamental in the development and continuity of each clan. Nonetheless, in the last few years, the menace of drug trafficking has begun to shake the foundation of our community and the position of women within it.

In contrast to many other regions of South America, drugs are neither grown, nor processed in Guajira. However, our location, which for years kept us isolated from European influences and the missions, has today become our biggest problem. Over the last twenty years, the Guajira has been converted into a giant landing strip and a port of transit for ships. Drugs are launched from here to the drug consuming countries of the world.

Drug trafficking has had more than a transitory presence. Huge quantities of money have attracted cheap labor to the region: men, women and children act as guards for the landing strips and illicit ports which appear and disappear as if by magic on the savannas and coasts. Drugs are stored in the workers' houses, involving entire families in this activity.

The quantities of money paid to the workers transforms our communities' traditional values. Our society's measured balance with the environment, based on taking only what is necessary from our habitat, is evaporating. At the same time, violence has grown, as has the number of arms—which are required in the functioning of the drug trade. Thus, the model of life based on respect for women and on strong community solidarity is at risk. For five centuries, women have exercised a fundamental role in the defense of our traditions along the long road of European colonization, and the place of women emerged strengthened by this process. Despite the Spanish conquistadors' plundering of our society, it never uprooted the status of women in Wayú society.

Throughout the world, drug traffickers use "mules" to transport small quantities of drugs from one spot to another. Here, drugs need only be carried the few kilometers from Colombia to the frontier cities of Venezuela. In this activity, Wayú women are in demand for their stamina, audacity and capacity to overcome fear.

Nonetheless, the government's actions to arrest violence generated by the drug trade have put Indigenous people at the center of a conflict which, in many cases, jeopardizes women the most. Even though we understand that the authorities' reaction is logical, and that the

"mules" work should be stopped, we cannot accept the treatment that our women receive daily on crossing the border check points. The searches that are carried out are inhuman and undignified. The national guard, police and customs officials assume that every woman dressed in traditional clothing or having our features is a "mule." During these searches, even women's genitals are examined in small

"For five centuries, women have exercised a fundamental role in the defense of our traditions..."

cubicles in front of the other traveling companions and without any kind of sanitary control. Only the poor and humble Wayú women who travel by truck or bus are searched in this way. Those who travel in private cars are not affected.

It is no exaggeration to call these strip searches a violation of our fundamental rights. The searches violate our dignity as human beings, it is not only an assault on our morality, but only exposes the population to venereal diseases and contributes to the deteriorating physical, emotional and mental health of the Wayú women. We hope that this statement causes reflection on this issue, as our people are living under inhuman conditions under the indifferent glances of the authorities. 🐾

Indigenous People's Alliance (IPA) Update

Indigenous People's Alliance (IPA) members attended the Tohono O'odham Human Rights Conference in Sells, Arizona, on July 29-30 in the Tohono O'odham Nation, extending alliances across the Mexico/U.S./Canada borders. Following the conference in Sells, the IPA convened in Phoenix for a strategy and planning meeting on Aug. 1. Representatives from Tonantzin, Indigenous Environmental Network, En'owkin Center, and Peace and Dignity Project attended. The draft principles for the CONIC constitutional convention were distributed for comment and discussion on recruitment strategy undertaken. Members were updated on the situation in Chiapas by Marcos Perez Gomez from ORIACH (Organizacion Regional de los Altos de Chiapas).

For more information, Contact:

Tonatierra, POB 24009, Phoenix Az 85074 Tel: 602-254-5230
Fax: 602-252-6094

First Encounter of Maya Elders and Spiritual Guides in Guatemala

Maya elders and spiritual guides met on March 13-22, 1994, at the different cardinal points in Tecpa'n, Guatemala. This gathering was a chance for an exchange of information on Maya astrology with an emphasis on predicting cycles which can aid elders in their healing rituals. The Maya Calendar was a major point of discussion. Some people believe that the prophecies of the calendar will have a great impact over the next 20 years.

A council of elders and spiritual guides formed at this encounter with the intention of unifying Indigenous communities. The participants also decided to invite elders from other

countries to partake in the next encounter. Those present envisioned the promotion and encouragement of elders around the world to practice, exchange, and impart their traditional teachings and healing practices.

First Congress of Maya Education

"The time has come that we re-initiate the circle of light..." was the theme of this congress sponsored by the CEM-G (Council of May Education of Guatemala), Aug. 8-11, 1994, in Quetzaltenango attended by approximately 350 Maya teachers.

In discussing the needs of the Maya, their reality and cosmology, spirituality and philosophy, the teachers recommended the initiation of Maya curriculum in both rural and urban areas, including: Mayan mathematics, astronomy, medicine, linguistics, arts, philosophy, productivity and culture. They also called for the opening of more schools for training bilingual Maya-Spanish teachers, and the institutionalization of 21 languages by the Academy of Maya Languages.

Workshops to Train Indigenous Journalists Planned in Norway

SAIIC-Norway representative Sebastian Lara and Sami journalist Unni Wenche Gronvold are establishing an Indigenous Journalists Project in Oslo, Norway. The project will organize training workshops for Indigenous journalists from throughout the continent. These workshops will strengthen the International Association of Indigenous Press (AIPIN) which is currently broadcasting from Mexico City. SAIIC-Norway is seeking economic assistance from governments who are sponsoring to the U.N. Decade for Indigenous Peoples, as well as from the Spanish News Agency EFE. The Foreign Relations Office of the Norwegian government is now studying SAIIC-Norway's proposal. This project will enable more Indigenous journalists to report on their own struggles.

For more information and to send assistance:

SAIIC-Norge, Torgatta 34, 0183 Oslo, Norway

Free Workshops For the Women of La Quebrada de Humahuaca, Argentina

The women of Quebrada de Humahuaca Province, in the Republic of Jujuy, Argentina, have been organizing. Recently, this work included designing new practical components for the state's educational system, including the practice of preserving fruits and vegetables, weaving, health education, ceramics, music and dance, and especially the recuperation of their native language Kechua. This project results from free workshops organized independently by women in various localities. Also the educational authorities, DIGEMAS, and the Ministry of Culture



Photo: Wara Alderete

Indigenous women's committee meets below the wiphala

and Education all included the women's proposals into the state system.

The workshops' primary objectives have been to achieve incentives for participation through collective organization, incentives for production based on a subsistence economy, incorporation of modern techniques, re-valuation and advancement of the culture, recovery of the native tongue, Kechua, and improving the standard of living.

For more information:

José de la Iglesia/ 2238-Cuyaya-San Salvador de Jujuy República Argentina/ Tel: 29605

Ecuadorian Indigenous Women's Forum

The forum was held between July and Sept. in preparation for the Fourth Women's Conference. Women from the Quichua, Shuar, Achuar, Siona, Cofán, Secoya, Hoao, Awa, Chachi, Tsachi and Huancavilcas prepared the document "Women of Yesterday, Women of Today, Always Women, We weave the Future of Our People" which analyzes their situation within the communities and within Ecuadorian society in general. They demand recognition of the different Indigenous nationalities within a Plurinational state, demarcation of Indigenous territories, and the granting of communal ownership over them.

At the same time, they requested government attention to improving agricultural and artisan production and commercialization, better infrastructure, education and health services. They also demanded respect for Indigenous peoples human rights and the participation of women in the processes that affect them.

For more information, or to obtain the meeting's final document:

Agencia Latinoamericana de Información (ALAI), Casilla 17-12-877, Quito, Ecuador, Av. 12 de octubre 622 y Patria, Edificio Bossano, Of. 503, Tel: (593) 2 505 074 Fax: (593) 2 505 073

First Regional Encounter of Mapuche Women in Chile

The Mapuche Zomo Ñi Unel Xawyn (First Regional Encounter of Mapuche Women) was

organized by the Coordinating Committee of Mapuche Women's Institutions of the IX Region on Sept. 5. Participants worked to analyze a number of fundamental cultural concepts in order to understand and implement them from an Indigenous perspective. Concepts like Mapuche identity; health and its relation to the sacred; education, and its relation to wisdom; the exercise of memory and precision; were central themes of the discussion. Finally they addressed the situation of Indigenous women who continue to live in the communities as well as those who have migrated.



Oct. 17-18

Seminar on Self-determination for Indian Peoples
Indigenous people from throughout Mexico will participate in this conference organized by El Colegio de Mexico, under the leadership of Rodolfo Stavenhagen.

Contact: Rodolfo Stavenhagen, tel/fax: 52-5-645-59-55

Oct. 20- Nov. 15

Big Mountain to Chiapas Good Medicine Run

This relay run will begin in Big Mountain and proceed to Brownsville, TX. (Oct.20-29). Second leg is from Brownsville to Chiapas (Nov. 1-15). Each night of the run traditional exchanges of Native American cultures will take place.

Sacred Run Foundation, Inc. PO BX 315 Newport, Kentucky 41071
Tel: (606)581-9456 Fax: (606)581-9458

Oct. 22-24

Guatemalan Government and URNG Re-open Negotiations

Peace negotiations between the Guatemalan government and the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala guerilla movement will re-open in Mexico City. Indian groups will be working to gain entrance into these talks which will affect Indigenous communities throughout Guatemala.

Nov. 10-20

Symposium: "502 Years of Denied Rights"

The Centro di Documentazione della Etniein Firenze, Italy, is organizing this conference focusing on rights to land, spirituality and identity.

Contact: Villa Fabbriotti- via Vitt. Emanuele 64, 50134 Firenze, Italia,
tel/fax: 39-55-48860

Nov. 13

First Indigenous Autochthonous Festival

Dancers and Musicians will be coming to La Paz from all over Bolivia to commemorate the death of Aymara heroine Tupac Katari in 1781.

Contact: CEDIMA (Aymara Women's Center for Ideological Discussion.
tel/fax: 591-2-35-48-74

Nov. 30-Dec. 2

National and International Conference on NAFTA

The Aukiñ Wallmapu Ngulam (All Lands Council) is calling this conference in Temuco, Chile out of concern for the government's plans to join NAFTA by the end of next year.

Contact: Aukiñ Wallmapu Ngulam, General Mackenna 152 Casilla 448,
Temuco, Chile tel/fax: 56-45-235-697

Dec. 9-10

Summit of the Americas

President Clinton has invited the other presidents of the Americas to Miami, Florida, to establish a strategy for developing a new relationship between the American states. Clinton is expected to pressure the Latin American states to accept U.S. patent laws and the international agreements of NAFTA and GATT. Indigenous people will work to establish an alternative meeting, and pressure governments to accept Indigenous participation.

Dec. 12

Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations will inaugurate the Decade for Indigenous People during International Human Rights Day in New York City. Indigenous leaders from around the world are expected to attend.

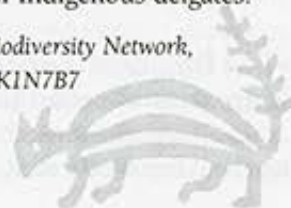
Contact: Tonatierra, 1818 S. 16th St, Phoenix, AZ 85034 #418
Tel: 602-254-5230
Or contact SAIIC

January, 1995

Indigenous Peoples, Customary Law and 'Intellectual Property Rights' Workshop

The workshop will be held at the SAIIC offices in Oakland. Indigenous representatives from Meso and South America will gather to develop Indigenous strategies for long-term survival in the face of new exploitation aimed at Indian lands. Sponsors are still needed to support participation of Indigenous delegates.

Contact: SAIIC or the Indigenous People's Biodiversity Network,
Suite 620, 1 Nicholas St, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N7B7
Tel: (613) 241 4500 Fax: (613) 241 2292





News from SAIIC...

SAIIC is in the midst of many changes. We have changed our name to the **South and Meso American Indian Rights Center** to better reflect the focus of our activities. While information gathering and dissemination continue to be major projects for us, the new name describes more clearly our role in international organizing: to fight for Indian peoples' rights. In a more concrete change, we will also be moving in November to new office spaces at 1714 Franklin (3rd Floor), also in downtown Oakland. This large new space will accommodate our expanded team of interns and volunteers.

Over the summer, we have focused largely on issues of biodiversity conservation and intellectual property rights, which are receiving increasing international attention. SAIIC board member and Cultural Survival-Canada, executive director, **Alejandro Amaru Argumedo** spent several weeks here in Oakland participating in events relating to these issues and planning for our upcoming workshop on "Indigenous peoples, Customary Law and Intellectual Property Rights."

This workshop will take place in early 1995 and will bring together Indigenous peoples from North and South America who are facing constant threats to their survival as cultures of the land. The workshop will be an opportunity for Indigenous peoples to develop policy and strategies to enhance their struggles for advancing inherent rights and protecting bio-cultural resources and spiritual values.

SAIIC assisted in organizing a planning meeting of the **Coordinating Committee of Indigenous women of Meso and South America**, which took place in Bolivia this June. SAIIC will continue participating in the steering com-

mittee as international relations coordinator. SAIIC board member and women's project coordinator, **Wara Alderete** furthered her information gathering on traditional health systems and attended a conference on women and traditional health hosted by Wayü Indians this September in Venezuela. In conjunction with The Book Publishing Company, we have published the second edition of the women's book "Daughters of Abya Yala".

For the fifth consecutive year, **Nilo Cayuqueo** represented SAIIC at the **UN Working Group on Indigenous Peoples** meeting in Geneva. He also helped organize a planning meeting for the Coordinating Committee of Indigenous Nations and Organizations of the Continent (CONIC) in Bolivia.

SAIIC is pleased to announce that **Marcos Yoc, Maya-Caqchiquel** from Guatemala, will be joining the board of directors. Marcos has been active in the Chimaltenango area and works in Maya education.

David Tecklin will be leaving the SAIIC Office Coordinator position to renew work with forest conservation issues. **Cheryl Musch** will be managing the office through the winter.

We are also happy to welcome **MacArthur Foundation Fellow Marc Becker** here to work with us for the next year. Marc will be using his extensive experience with computer networking to help us expand our information systems via the internet. Marc lived in Ecuador last year, where he will return again next year to finish research for his dissertation.

SAIIC has established an electronic conference on PeaceNet called *saic.indio*. We will be posting a variety of new and historical information on SAIIC's activities and the Indian movement in this conference.

The full text of the Barbados III Declaration excerpted in this issue has been posted there in English and Spanish. To join PeaceNet, call (415) 442-0220. If you already have an Internet e-mail account you can be placed on a mailing list to receive the postings to the SAIIC conference by sending a note which simply says "subscribe saic-1" to majordomo@igc.apc.org.

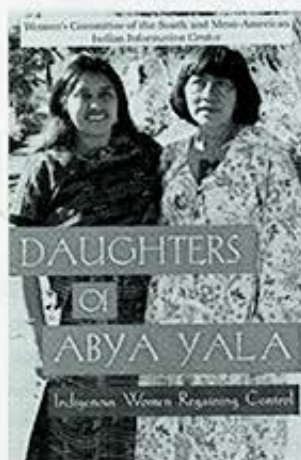
Over the summer, SAIIC has also been very busy implementing several organizational strategies in order to strengthen our work. We completed one of the two public awareness campaigns planned for this year. Approximately 5,000 people in the San Francisco Bay Area received news and information about SAIIC—most likely for the first time. This effort will also help to finance the second planned public awareness campaign targeting approximately 200 foundations in the United States. Broadening our base of subscribers to the journal is critical in our move toward more self-sustainability. You can help with this effort by sending us the names and addresses of anyone who might be interested in receiving information about SAIIC and *Abya Yala News*.

You are cordially invited to SAIIC's Office Warming Party

1714 Franklin, 3rd Fl.
Monday, December 14, 1995
6:00-10:00pm

- Refreshments will be served. Office warming gifts gladly accepted.
- We still need office equipment, including: modems, a scanner, Macintosh or 486 PC computers, as well as all the usual items.

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. Forty-eight pages with beautiful black and white photographs. Printed on recycled paper. \$6 + \$1.50 shipping. An updated, bound edition is also available for \$8 + \$1.50 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 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 + \$1.75 for shipping & handling.

Video: Rebuilding Our Communities

Indigenous leaders from Central and South America discuss the 500-years campaign, which began as an Indian response to the Quincentenary celebration and has developed as an ongoing dialogue among indigenous activists. Produced by SAIIC. \$18 + \$1.75 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 + \$1.75 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 + \$1.75 shipping.

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