

MAPUCHE PROTEST FORCED EVICTION

The Mapuche Nation of Chile has launched a campaign to draw international attention to the plight of over one million Indians threatened with forced eviction from their ancestral land.

"What we are asking is that the Chilean authorities leave our people alone," Reynaldo Mariqueo of the Mapuche Committee in Europe said. This message was also communicated to Chilean Ambassador German Riesco Zañartu in a letter addressed to Chilean President Patricio Aylwin.

The Committee, representing the Mapuche-Pehuenche, said they launched the campaign to confront the "unofficial state of siege" declared recently in Indian territory in Chile.

Mariqueo said: "The government has sent in a police contingent of approximately 400 men, military vehicles, police vans, mounted police and helicopters, and (taken) other measures to prevent a possible uprising in the Andes mountains and take the land."

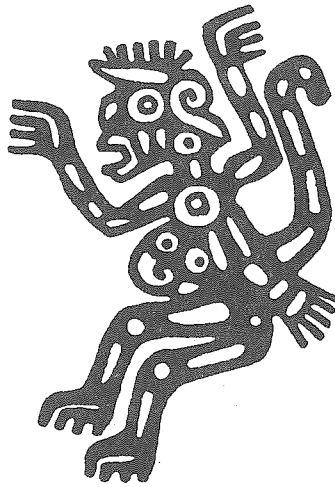
The community, situated in the Quinquen district of Cautín province, survived mainly on the pehuen tree, harvesting the pine nuts for food and selling or exchanging the surplus for other essential goods. But the Indians were unaware that as far back as 1918 their land had been sold by the Chilean state to private owners (non-Mapuche) who then resold it for a profit.

In 1987, Pinochet's government issued a decree that allowed timber industries to override an earlier forest protection law. When the present government came to power, another law was passed to protect the forests, which meant the owners now wished to sell the land that they could no longer exploit.

But in June 1990, the land owners filed a case at the supreme court asking the Indians to leave to facilitate the selling of the land. "The present situation is desperate. Until now the strength of opposition from Mapuche organisations has delayed the eviction pro-

cess," Mariqueo said.

Orders to proceed with the operation, he said, have now been given and will be carried out by Gen. Osvaldo Muñoz Sanhueza, who was active in the Pinochet dictatorship. The objective, Mariqueo said, is to transfer the people together with their personal belongings and animals to a designated area away



from the community, while their homes will be destroyed.

Mariqueo quoted Sanhueza as saying that military units from three provinces had been mobilized, and a base camp had been set up to supervise the takeover and provide logistic support.

The Mapuches, living in the Andes mountains, are the original inhabitants of what is now Argentina and Chile. During the Spanish conquest, the Mapuches signed a treaty to define the borders of their territory, which was honored by Spain. The treaty was also acknowledged by Argentina and Chile when they gained independence.

They signed several more agreements with the Mapuches but which they later broke. "Our major objective is to continue with the campaign until justice is served to our people," Mariqueo said. "if we don't campaign, the atrocities will continue. Our ultimate aim is to

press for autonomy and self-determination for our people."

Source: *International Press Service*

Mapuches Living Under the Ozone Hole

The people living in the tip of Tierra del Fuego are living under the ozone hole, which scientists have recently found to be growing much faster than anticipated. It is now four times larger than the United States and from late August until early December is directly over the high mountain homeland of the Mapuche. Walter Ulloa, a 28-year-old farmhand found that his arms burned "like boiling water" and his eyes became swollen, irritated and clouded over after working high mountain pastures. His left eye is now completely blind. After examining him, Chilean doctors said that he was probably exposed to excessive ultraviolet-B radiation. They prescribed UV-resistant sunglasses, which Ulloa can't afford.

Chilean scientists estimate that levels of the carcinogenic ultraviolet-B radiation jumped more than 1,000 percent in Punta Arenas, the largest town located under the ozone hole. Huge increases in skin cancer, and sheep, fish and rabbit blindness are being reported in the area.

Despite this startling evidence, there is very little research being done in the area. The University of Chile was unable to raise the \$11,000 for a spectral radiometer to measure radiation levels and because of this a planned three-year study fell through.