



At the end of the 1970's, President Turbay Ayala tried to do away with collective ownership of Indian communities by proclaiming the Indian Statute, which dissolved the *cabildos*, the traditional Indian community organizations. All the communities rejected this decree and decided to hold the First National Indian Gathering in October, 1980. During this meeting the National Indigenous Coordinator was founded with the goal of planning the first national Indian congress. This congress was held in Bogota in February of 1982. There were over 2,000 Indian delegates present who represented 20 regional councils from all around the country. During the congress the National Indian Organization of Colombia (ONIC) was founded with headquarters in Bogota.

ONIC's program is:

1. The defense of Indian autonomy and history.
2. The defense of culture and Indian traditions.
3. Bilingual/bicultural education under direct control of Indian organizations.
4. Promotion of health and traditional medicine.
5. Support of community economic organizations and return of Indian lands that have been seized.

At present in Colombia there is a climate of war between the government and guerrilla forces. The army has occupied the Cauca region and the air force is continuously bombing. Animals have been killed, crops have been destroyed, and numerous Indians have fled to the cities, where they are homeless.

Various guerrilla groups control different areas of Colombia and force Indians to join them. Javier Delgado, one of the ex-chiefs of the guerrilla group Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, ordered the death of dozens of indigenous small farmers in the Cauca region during the first week of February, 1986. He accused them of collaborating with the government armed forces. The killings were witnessed by reporters from French television who had

been invited by Delegado. The French cameramen refused to film and returned to Bogota to denounce the massacre.



(Reproduced from *Como Nos Organizamos*, published by CRIC, Nov., 1983.)

### ONIC Publication Celebrates Tenth Anniversary

The second ONIC congress in February of this year coincided with the tenth anniversary of the magazine *Unidad Indígena (Indian Unity)*, the official publication of ONIC and CRIC. In its anniversary issue, *Unidad Indígena* states, "We see the need to have our own paper because often articles and books appear about us, but it is not our voice that speaks. In our paper, we see ourselves as we really are, men, women, and children with our own dignity, our own languages, and our own beliefs."