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STATE FRONTIERS AND INDIAN NATIONS

- Ecuador-Peru Border War

- US/Mexico
Border Encounter

- Interview With
Leonardo Viteri

- Demand For Autonomy
In Mexico



LINKING INDIAN PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS

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On the Cover:

Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, defending their land
Photo: João R. Ripper, *Imagens da Terra*, 1994. Courtesy of Amanaká

Abya Yala News

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*Abya Yala is the Kuna word for Continent of Life which includes all of the Americas.

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State borders, rather than cultural borders, are one of the largest obstacles blocking Indigenous peoples from communicating, working together, and reinvigorating our cultures. For this reason, we have dedicated this edition to publicizing Indigenous thinking and discussion on nation-state border issues. The 1995 war between Peru and Ecuador has rekindled interest in this on-going debate. Reminiscent of the formative nineteenth-century nation-state independence wars in Latin America, this recent war is a bloody conflict between nation-states fought with Indigenous lives.

Twentieth-century examples of similar situations include the 1932-1935 Chaco War between Paraguay and Bolivia which took 40,000 Indigenous lives, the so-called Soccer War in 1968 between El Salvador and Honduras, the never-ending strife on the Colombian-Venezuelan border, and the hardships which the Miskitu people in Nicaragua and Honduras and the Kuna Nation in Panama and Colombia have endured.

European colonizers first, and then American States, delineated borders. Outsiders divided the continents' geographical space and states, provinces, departments, municipalities, and counties replaced cultural territories of Indigenous origin. The Spanish Crown, after decimating and exploiting Indigenous peoples, decided to give some territorial rights through the systems of "Mercedes Indivisas," "Cédulas Reales," and other communal rights. Indigenous peoples exercised autonomous rights to those territories.

However, after the *Criollo* (descendants of Spaniards) elites expelled the Spanish monarchy in the so-called War of Independence, they took away those territorial rights, and imposed on Indigenous peoples a new ideology of "citizenship." Indigenous peoples were forced to enroll in the *Criollo* Independence Army. Needless to say, they were used as cannon fodder. The new governing elites decided that it was their turn to rule the vast territory which is today America. The *Criollo* elites reshaped, according to their individual interests, what today are considered the Latin American states.

Indigenous peoples were not consulted to evaluate that process. With our populations decimated, borders were imposed on us, subdividing our Indigenous nations. Although the decline of the Spanish empire and the emergence of the *Criollo* elite ushered in the recognition of some of our own traditional territory, Indigenous "uprisings" throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were constant reminders of the denial of our immemorial rights to our own territories which we have occupied for thousands of years.

New legal systems based on individualistic Roman judiciary tenets contradicted the collective cultures of Indigenous peoples. Today, the Latin American states continue to deny and ignore Indigenous peoples' conception of justice and government.

Today, the Indigenous movements demand to be heard. It is important that throughout this Decade of Indigenous Peoples our different conceptions of political rights to self-determination and autonomy be re-examined. Our cultural practices and our reproduction as collectives requires having control over our territories. We are more conscious about the need to be heard as "collective entities." Indigenous peoples' demands need to be heard and met by new rules that cannot be defined by western laws and cultures. It is imperative that governments and societies recognize our rights as distinct and original peoples of the world.

Borders are but one of several obstacles we face as Indigenous peoples. Each demarcated border line has been created by the process of colonization and violence against Indigenous nations. Whether domestic or international, borders bear the same colonial logic. Ultimately, they mean our demise. In light of this fact, the articles in this issue will update the tremendous pressures we must face due to anachronistic colonial legal structures, by now obsolete, that deny us our rights as original Indigenous peoples.

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Guajajara Murdered in Brazil

Manuel Mendes, a Guajajara Indian, was killed following a land invasion in the state of Maranhão, Brazil. Mendes' assassin, Jaime Jardim, was an invader of the Krikati Indian territory, located in the Brazilian state of Maranhão. According to his daughter, Manuel Mendes had been receiving death threats for some time. Tension had been building in that area since a group of invaders prevented a team of technicians from demarcating the Krikati territory.

The minister of Justice issued a directive ordering the Krikati territory to be demarcated in July of 1992. However, because of pressure from local politicians, land invaders and the family of ex-president José Sarney, the demarcation has been interrupted.

Meanwhile, Krikati land continues to be illegally occupied. Invaders have settled on about twenty farms and in a Krikati village. In December of last year, when technicians were once again sent to demarcate the area, invaders burned the entrance bridges and blocked access to the area.

Information supplied by CIMI-Conselho Indigenista Missionario (Indian Missionary Council)

Colombian Guerrillas Attack Venezuelan Outpost

Tension has been building between Colombia and Venezuela since last February, when Colombian guerrillas crossed the Venezuelan border and attacked a military outpost in the Amazon lowlands. Both Colombian and Venezuelan officials deny the possibility of armed conflict between the two countries, yet Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera ordered thousands of troops to the border area.

As a result of the conflict, anti-Colombian sentiment is high in Venezuela. Venezuelan authorities have deported thousands of undocumented Colombian migrant workers and graffiti slogans such as "Colombian Murderers Go Home" have appeared throughout Caracas.

Honduras: Xicaque Denounce Government

Xicaque leader Julio Soto recently denounced the Honduran government's failure to demarcate their lands and assure their survival. "We're in a bad state. The government will not say the land is ours, and

allows the wild 'ladinos' (non-Indians) to throw us off the land our ancestors left us," he said.

The Xicaque are one of the largest Indigenous groups in Honduras, and although they have been identified by national and international authorities as victims of social oppression, nothing has been done to alleviate their problems. The Xicaque suffer from starvation, illnesses, and the slow but eventual extermination of their people by colonizers of their land.

A Xicaque elder, Timoteo Calix, believes that the genocide of his people will end when the Honduran government sends the International Labor Organization (ILO) ratification of the Indigenous People's Convention 169, which guarantees their protection. Meanwhile, the government has promised to send the ratification of Convention 169 in order to assure all Indigenous communities that it will not abandon its commitment to preserve Xicaque lives and culture.

Information courtesy of InterPress Third World News Agency.

Bill to Grant Ngobe-Bugle Autonomy in Panama

Due to strong opposition by the Ngobe-Bugle community of Panama to the mining of their lands, the government has drawn up a bill that will grant the community autonomy over its territory. The Ngobe-Bugle people claim ownership of over 11,000 square kilometers of land in the western part of Panama.

Marcelino Montezuma, a Ngobe-Bugle leader, explained that his community rejected the mining of their territory out of concern for environmental degradation. The Ngobe-Bugle people felt that without autonomy over their land, they would be powerless to regulate the mining process. "First of all, we want independence, then we will see if mining will suit us," he said.

While discarding the use of violence to gain autonomy, Montezuma insisted that the Indigenous people of Panama "are losing patience." He also said that they demand to be treated with dignity and will not allow the Panamanian government to take away their ancestral lands.

Information courtesy of InterPress Third World News Agency.

Brazil: Indigenous Commission Fights for Demarcation

A commission of twenty-three Xucuru Kariri, Wassu Cocal, Geripankó, Kariri-Xokó, and Karapotó Indians from Alagoas, along with Xokó Indians from Sergipe, went to Brasília to denounce acts of violence against Indians and demand measures for the demarcation of their lands. The commission was heard by audiences at FUNAI, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Chamber of Deputies. Citing one of the most serious incidents, the Karapotó warned that at least eight mysterious fires had destroyed crops, fences and grazing land in their 1,810-hectare territory, which has been the object of litigation for two years.

Canadian Mining Interests in Nicaragua Threaten Sumu

The Nicaraguan Ministry of Economics recently awarded a mining permit to the Nycon Resource Company of Canada to search for gold and other minerals in the Bosawas Reserve. Nelson Lopez of Nicaragua's Environment and Natural Resources Agency (MARENA) has said that the mining operation threatens the health of the Sumu and constitutes "a violation of the 1991 law" that established the reserve. Yet the Bosawas Reserve, on the border of Honduras in northwest Nicaragua, continues to be the site of mining, logging, and subsistence farming operations that endanger Indigenous populations and the environment. According to MARENA, there are now 700 non-Indigenous families living on the borders of the reserve who have cleared thousands of acres of forest for crops and cattle-grazing. Loggers have begun to haul tropical hardwood from the area to Managua, and flights

over the reserve reveal huge clear-cut areas on the western and southern edges. Sumu leaders have demanded the cancellation of the mining permit.

Information courtesy of Nicaragua Center for Community Action.

Indigenous Assembly Grapples with Suicides

Suicides among the Guarani Kaiowa, which have been on the rise for the past ten years, were the main subject discussed this past May at an Assembly of the Aty Guassu Organization in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The Assembly brought together shamans, Indian leaders and chiefs from 22 villages to try to learn why 22 Indians have committed suicide this year.

The suicide rate among the Guarani Koaiowa is unusually high. The World Health Organization considers that an estimate of over one case in 10,000 per year is abnormal. According to FUNAI, 161 suicides, most of which were committed by young Indians, were registered among the Guarani Kaiowa from 1985 through May of this year.

Extreme poverty, the gradual loss of traditional religious practices, and, above all, the lack of land are factors directly linked to the suicides. Araldo Veron, who also once attempted suicide, spoke on these factors at the Assembly.

The villages of Dourados, with 8,900 Indians squeezed in 3,530 hectares of land, and Caarapor, with 2,346 Indians, have been the most affected.

Information courtesy of CIMI-Conselho Indigenista Missionário.

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A Nineteenth-Century War in the Amazon:

Indigenous Communities Caught in the Ecuador/Peru Border Dispute

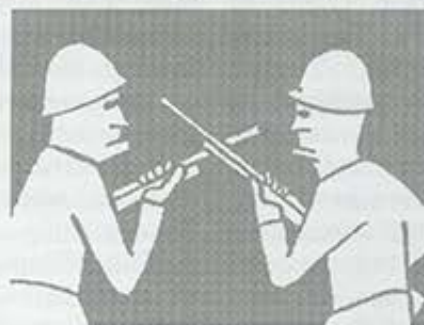
by *Fernando Rivera*

Indigenous people who live in the disputed area between Ecuador and Peru have faced severe hardship and danger during the latest conflict which erupted in January of this year. Forced to fight and caught in wars not of their own design, Indigenous communities in both Ecuador and Peru endured the death of some of their people in battle, the threat of mass starvation, illnesses, and the destruction of their environment.

The recent fighting is an unfortunate continuation of border disputes which have divided the two countries since the wars of independence and is another example of the internal colonialism to which Indigenous peoples are subjected. Each country has based its territorial rights on different treaties and international legal concepts. Each has had its own reasons for waging war. Both Ecuador and Peru, however, have ignored the impact that such land disputes have had on the Indigenous peoples who live along their borders. With every war and every treaty, neither Ecuador nor Peru has been as negatively affected as these Indigenous communities.

The territorial dispute between Ecuador and Peru has been one of the longest and most complicated land disputes on the continent. During colonial times, first the Viceroyalty of Peru and later the Viceroyalty of Gran Colombia administered the Amazonian provinces. In 1829, after gaining

independence, Peru and Gran Colombia signed an agreement in which they did not establish borders, but agreed to respect the former colonial divisions. Since the borders in that region were never clearly defined, their demarcation became a topic of constant debate. In 1941 a war broke out between Ecuador and Peru which ended with the signing of the Río de Janeiro Protocol which sought to define the border between the two countries. In 1950, however, Ecuador declared the Protocol null



and void because of what it believed to be technical differences in demarcating 78 kilometers of land along the Condor Cordillera. In 1981, another war broke out between the two countries. Some analysts believe that the ruling government of Ecuador began that war as a way to distract attention away from its economic problems. Similarly, some analysts believe that President Fujimori may have begun the current war in order to assure his re-election.

Whatever the motive, it is the Indigenous communities along the

Ecuador/Peru border that are the most affected when the two countries decide to go into battle. First, both countries force Indians to fight in the military. This makes neighboring communities along the border and binational communities (communities divided by the border) fight among each other. Much has been said recently about intra-ethnic wars all around the world, but little attention has been paid to the fact that Indian peoples in Ecuador and Peru have been forced to kill each other. Many of these people belong to the same ethnic or cultural groups, as in the case of the Shuar, Achuar, Aguaruna, Huambiza and Quichua Indians.

Second, the toll of the war is felt primarily in Indigenous communities along the border where most of the fighting occurs. Hundreds of families have been displaced by the destruction of their homes, harvests, and cattle. Bombings occur regularly, and deadly diseases are spreading rapidly.

"Indigenous communities have never had borders," says Mino Eusebio Castro, vice-president of AIDSESP (Indigenous Association for the Development of the Peruvian Amazon). "What is occurring is that there are conflicting interests between two political groups striving for economic control. We have never been consulted over the creation of borders, yet who do they use when there is a conflict of this type? Who provides the food? Who gets recruited to fight on the front lines? Who gets affected by protecting the borders? It is the Indigenous people!"

Luis Macas, president of CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador) reported that the war has directly affected 21 of the 400 Shuar centers (or communities) in the Ecuadorian Amazon because of their proximity to the border. Also, among the 30 Achuar centers, the

11 centers closest to the border have been greatly affected. Furthermore, out of the 25 Quichua communities on both sides of the border (10 in Ecuador and 15 in Peru), the number of affected families reaches 800. Finally, other smaller bordering communities also suffer from the war. These include the Siona, Secoya, Cofán, and the Shiwiar communities. The total number of Indians in Ecuador alone affected by this war reaches 20,000. If the conflict continues, Macas predicts the loss of more Indigenous lives, homes, and livelihoods.

A recent article in the Quito daily *El Comercio* describes the social and economic effect of the war. According to the report, 180 Indigenous communities and approximately 3,000 families "are faced with a social, economic, and psychological crisis because their crops and animals have disappeared and their understanding of their own territory has been changed" since the fighting began. "Life is not the same. Tranquillity has not returned to the selva since the cease-fire," said Luis Yampies, a leader of the Shuar community. "Many communities cannot return to their lands because they are mined. That was a defense strategy by the Ecuadorian military, but we are affected."

In formal and informal declarations, Indigenous groups have denounced the violence and demanded that the governments of Ecuador and Peru stop the war. COICA (The Coordinating Body for the Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin), an umbrella group that represents Indigenous organizations from the eight nation-states with territorial claims in the Amazon Basin, proposed the creation of a bi-national park which would demilitarize the conflict zone and guarantee peace for years to come. The proposal was

born out of an impending need to protect the environment and the desire to re-integrate the Shuar and Achuar communities in Ecuador with their cultural counterparts in Peru—the Aguaruna and the Huambiza Indians.

Another—perhaps more radical—declaration signed by members

of both CONAIE and CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon), demands, among other things, that Ecuador be recognized as a "multinational, multicultural and multilingual country" (see side-

Continued on page 38

Ecuadorian Indigenous Nationalities to the nation and world:

The Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) met in an Encounter of Solidarity for Peace and Dignity in the city of Sucúa, Ecuador, at the headquarters of the Interprovincial Federation of Shuar-Achuar Centers (FICSHA), on February 21-22, 1995. After analyzing recent conflicts between Ecuador and Peru, we declare the following:

In the countries of Latin America and around the world and, particularly among countries which are in conflict, we comprise a diversity of peoples and cultures which are historically located in our own territories.

The border conflicts that today lead to bloodshed in neighboring populations and destroy their harmony and lifestyles, are not in our interests. Rather, they have led to a stalemate and a deepening poverty for the communities involved.

For these reasons, we Indigenous nationalities propose:

1. That Ecuador be constitutionally recognized as a pluri-national, multi-cultural, and pluri-lingual state, because the recognition of and respect for different peoples is not an obstacle to the unity of a diverse country, but rather a resource that will strengthen its cohesion.

2. In homage to the International Decade of Indigenous Peoples that the United Nations declared, we demand of international organizations and the guarantee nations of the Río Protocol that Indigenous peoples in Ecuador and Peru be included in the peace negotiations as active participants in the search for a definitive solution to the conflict.

3. That the Ecuadorian State permanently suspend the colonization programs in the ancestral lands of the Indigenous nationalities of the Amazon Region.

4. The legalization of Indigenous territories in the border area and in the Amazon Region as a fundamental guarantee of the security and territorial integrity of the country.

5. That the National Parks, Protected Forests, and Forest Reserves be given to and administered directly by Indigenous organizations for the appropriate use and management of their natural resources.

6. That we be repaid for the socio-economic and environmental impacts caused by the war; a guarantee of the return of displaced peoples to their Indigenous communities; and the establishment of a fund for the relatives of civilians killed in the conflict.

7. That the budget for the Intercultural Bilingual Education program be augmented.

Indigenous Fragmentation: Mexico's Domestic and International Borders

by Araceli Burguete Cal y Mayor

For Indigenous populations, the notion of "borders" is directly associated with a history of occupation and usurpation of their territories. In the case of Mexico, the wars that have accompanied each international border demarcation have not been limited to Indigenous populations in the north or south. The formation of the Mexican Federation was carried out with the same amount of violence and colonization. Each territorial division within the country has been imposed as a "border" for Indigenous peoples. These borders were constructed in an artificial and arbitrary manner, and were superimposed over a cultural and historical geography that dates back thousands of years.

Mexico's Southern Border

Mayan communities suffer from both domestic and international border impositions. Within Mexico, five states of the Mexican Federation (Yucatán, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Chiapas), almost one hundred municipalities, and over one hun-

dred cooperative farms and communities divide the Maya people. Internationally, the Maya area covers the borders of six nation-states (Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador). The most costly impact of this fragmentation has been on the Mayan global identity, now surviving in multiple linguistic identities (Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolabal, Quiché, Tzutujil, Quekchi, etc.). These linguistic groups have not been able to unify into one single Mayan identity.

Nevertheless, there are encouraging signs for unification, even though the Maya people continue to be fragmented. In fact, it appears that those living in Guatemala are undergoing a process of reconstruction of their global identity. Even though this phenomenon is also taking place in Mexico (albeit, in isolated instances), in the majority of the states in which Maya people live, the impact of tourism and industrialization has accelerated the tendency toward "deindianization." This accelerated "deindianization" is occurring primarily in Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán, and Quintana Roo. In Chiapas, despite a strong Maya cultural tradition, the Maya global identity is fragmented due to linguistic, municipal, and communal differences.

Despite this fragmentation, the states, municipalities and communities which make up the southern border of Mexico constitute a region that has historically been integrated through a common Maya cultural base. Still, the phenomenon of "borders" has had a tremendous impact on the Maya people of Mexico.

The Treaty of Limits officially demarcated Mexico's southern border with Guatemala on September 27, 1882. The demarcation with Belize dates to July of 1893, and was defined through negotiations with Great Britain. Neither demarcation process was peaceful. Wars and border conflicts preceded each accord. Even today, some Guatemalans regard Chiapas' incorporation into Mexico as an act of annexation and theft on the part of Mexico. This feeling is similar to that of Mexicans in regards to the US-occupied Mexican territories of Texas, New Mexico, and California. In reality, this kind of nationalistic rhetoric about stolen land hides the fact that the real victims of border disputes and land annexation have been the Indigenous communities on both the northern and southern borders of the Mexican nation.

On September 12, 1824, Chiapas was officially annexed into Mexico through a plebiscite. A total

Araceli Burguete is a native of Chiapas, sociologist, and technical and research coordinator for the Independent Indian Peoples' Front (FIPI).

"Mayan communities suffer from both domestic and international border impositions. Within Mexico, five states of the Mexican Federation (Yucatán, Campeche, Quintana Roo, Tabasco, and Chiapas), almost one hundred municipalities, and over one hundred cooperative farms and communities divide the Maya people."

number of almost 100,000 citizens voted to include Chiapas into the Mexican Federation. However, not all of those who lived in Chiapas had the opportunity to vote on such a crucial issue. In 1824, only those who could read or write and those who could prove that they were "honorable" citizens (citizens with wealth and of mestizo or criollo ancestry) were allowed to vote. The opinion and collective perception of territory of the Maya, Quiché, Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, Quekchí, and Mame peoples that lived in Chiapas was never taken into consideration.

A Border in Conflict

The Maya people's response to the fragmentation of their culture has never been passive. Hundreds of rebellions have demonstrated the Maya communities' nonconformity with their reality as a divided people. The Maya rebellion that has lasted for more than twenty years in Guatemala and the recent Maya uprising in Chiapas are modern examples of Maya resistance against the borders and what these borders signify for them: oppression and the loss of self-determination.

The concept of "border" in southern Mexico became more tangible as a result of internal conflicts in

Central America. Thousands of political refugees crossed Mexico's border. Many of them were Maya people who were escaping repression at the hands of the Guatemalan authorities. These people have now settled in the municipalities adjacent to the border. According to official government sources, there are almost 40 thousand Guatemalan refugees along Mexico's southern border, with half of them in the state of Chiapas. Many believe that the actual number of political refugees who have settled in the south of Mexico is higher. As is well known, not all refugees were accounted for in these statistics. Estimates indicate that the number of Guatemalan refugees in Mexico is at least twice that of the official count.

The presence of refugees and the border's proximity to the Guatemalan guerrillas push Mexico's government to increase the presence of police and soldiers to guard the borders. Because of this, the one million Indigenous people of Chiapas and other border states have suffered assaults on their liberties, and all possibilities for democracy were halted. The authorities of Chiapas have consistently defied existing federal laws

by allowing certain individuals to break them with impunity.

In the last twenty years, the Maya who live along the southern border of Mexico have lived in a virtual state of war. They have struggled to achieve democracy via peaceful means. However, the authorities have responded with acts of violence and terrorism, similar to those experienced in "low-intensity" conflict areas. Violation of Indigenous People's human rights and impunity for the violators has also been a characteristic of the past twenty years. The violence and repression against the Mayas of Mexico's southern border has no precedence in the rest of the country. Yet, this kind of violence is not circumstantial. It is reproduced to the same magnitude in other border areas. ☪



Once Divided:

Indigenous Peoples in the US and Mexico Unite Across the Border

AUKA MAJ KUAR KUAR was the First Historical Encounter of Indigenous Peoples of Baja California and the United States border states of New Mexico and Arizona. At this encounter, Indigenous peoples divided by nation-state borders attempted to rebuild their sense of unity by exchanging views and analyzing their current position regarding the ongoing process of organizing on a regional level. What follows is a brief report on this encounter.

*based on article by Carolina de la Peña and
Eugenio Bermejillo, Ojarasca, Mexico*

In June of 1994, the First Indigenous US/Mexico Border Auka Maj Kuar Kuar Encounter took place in Tecate, Baja California. Unlike similar conferences, attendance was not limited to tribal leaders. Members of all ranks represented their communities at the Encounter. These communities included those associated with UECI (The Common Land and Indigenous Communities of Baja California Union), Peace and Dignity, and The Native Cultures of B.C. Institute. However, tribal leaders were by no means absent. Leaders from communities across Mexico, Baja California, and the US were present.

The Encounter's purpose was to initiate communication among Indigenous peoples in Mexico and the United States. Several issues were discussed. One of the most important being the difficult situation faced by bi-national Indigenous communities (communities that are divided by the US/Mexico border).

These discussions resulted in the drafting of a declaration concerning this problem that was later sent to bi-national Indigenous communities for approval. Part of the declaration reads as follows: "Our

rights have been limited by the Guadalupe-Hidalgo Treatise of 1848, which does not recognize the historical and natural rights of freedom of movement within our Indigenous communities, linked both linguistically and culturally, on either side of the border." The signers of the declaration demanded the right to cross freely for ceremonial and religious purposes, advocated the toppling of existing barriers in order that members of Indigenous communities may visit one another and rekindle relationships with family members separated by the border, and requested access to natural resources necessary for cultural or medicinal purposes and for the construction of houses. Members of the Hia-ced O'odham, Yaqui, Kumiai, Kiliwa, Pa-ipai, Cochimi, Kikapú, Mono, and Cucapá communities signed the declaration.

In 1989, at the Border Tribes Summit, similar issues were raised. Representatives from twenty Indigenous communities from the Sonora/Arizona border and from the Creek, Cree, Cherokee, Ojibwa, Mohawk, and other communities separated by the US/Canada border were present. One of the main topics of discussion was the decla-

ration from the O'odham Nation calling for the restitution of its territory in Mexico, reduced from 4,800 to 20 square kilometers in the span of two centuries due to cattle ranchers' invasions from both the US and Mexico. In July of that same year, the O'odham Nation had asked the United Nations Subcommittee for Indigenous Rights to intervene in this eight-year territorial conflict that is still unresolved. The importance that Vine Deloria bestowed upon the Summit and the declaration from the O'odham Nation is true for all of the Indigenous communities that are separated by national borders: "The fact that the O'odhams present themselves as one nation, forces the governments of both Mexico and the US to resolve the conflict through negotiations among equals and prohibits them from just turning the matter over to the courts."

The O'odham Nation did not actively participate at the Encounter in Tecate, which may help to explain the lack of continuity between this recent Encounter and the 1989 Summit. However, an Indigenous group that is associated with the O'odhams—the Hia-ced O'odhams—was present. The Hia-

Abya Yala News Back Issues

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

❑ Confronting Biocolonialism

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

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

❑ Indian Movements and The Electoral Process

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

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

❑ Chiapas: Indigenous Uprising with Campesino Demands?

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

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

❑ II Continental Encounter of Indigenous Peoples

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

Also includes:

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

❑ 1993 Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples

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

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

❑ Exclusive Interviews with Four Indian Leaders

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

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

❑ March on Quito: Amazon Indians Demand to be Heard

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

Also includes:

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

❑ News from Around the Continent

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

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

ced O'dhams have been struggling since the beginning of the 1980s to be recognized as a community.

As a result of the Hia-ced O'dhams' rejection of several mining projects, it became increasingly clear that they continued to exist as a group with the necessary strength to rejoin the O'dham Nation. But the Union Congress, at first, rejected an initiative to recognize the Hia-ceds as part of the O'dham Nation due to a lack of information regarding the number of people in this group and location of their communities. Marleen Vázquez said that faced with this problem, "a small group of people went out to visit houses in the Hia-ced communities and took down names of people, genealogies, photos, and even visited cemeteries. We sent all of the information we received to the O'dham Nation, and they accepted us. In 1984, 250 of us became members of the tribe.

Since then, 1,200 of us have been inscribed, and there are 300 individuals whose acceptance is pending. The most difficult cases are found in Mexico. The Mexican O'dhams can't be legally inscribed in the tribe, until we have enough resources to complete the investigation as required."

Another group also separated by the US/Mexico border, the Kikapú, presented its list of problems at the Encounter and drafted a series of needs and demands. The Kikapú descended from the Algonquins, and after seven successive migrations, finally settled partly in Oklahoma and partly in Múzquiz, Coahuila. Since 1947, they have enjoyed the right of free movement across the US/Mexico border. During the summers, some Kikapú work on farms in Oklahoma and return to Mexico in the winter. Because they are a migrating culture, they have called for the sim-

plification of customs procedures so that needed resources can reach the Kikapú in Mexico. These resources include *tule acuático*, a basic material used in the construction of homes and in the making of crafts and automobiles. The importation of resources into Mexico requires fiscal registrations and credit cards, both of which they do not have. "The Constitutional Reform, which holds the State responsible for the preservation of Indigenous cultures, is not carried out here," declared José Ovalle, an anthropologist that was invited to the Encounter by the Kikapú. Ovalle spoke at the Encounter about the newly implemented customs procedures at the US/Mexico border that make it nearly impossible for the Kikapú on either side of the border to communicate. ☺

For further information, see *Ojarasca* #38-39, (November-December 1994).

Nicaragua:

Colonial History Repeats Itself on the Atlantic Coast of Central America

by Amalia Dixon

In 1821, the *Criollo* governors of the Central American countries met in Guatemala to celebrate their political independence. At the same time, they defined the border demarcations of their respective states, overstepping the previous historic demarcations of the ancestral Miskitu, Sumu, and Rama peoples. By arbitrarily deciding where national borders would be, the new states violated our territorial rights. What already existed between our peoples was distorted. It remains impossible to accept these impositions.

Part of the southern Caribbean coast of Honduras is Miskitu territory. It was crossed by the Rio Coco, which today serves as a dividing border line between Nicaragua and Honduras. After the *Criollo* Independence, what remained on the Honduran side was considered disputed territory. It was added to Honduras in 1959 by the World Court at The Hague. This separated the Miskitus into two countries: Nicaragua and Honduras. A first attempt at relocating all the Miskitus to Nicaragua precipitated the deaths of many Indigenous peo-

ple, both young and old. Banished from their ancestral land, deprived of their natural medicine, they suffered from scarcity of food, clothing, and animals. In short, the migration had a tremendously negative physical and emotional impact. Some decided to return to Honduras, their birth place, traumatized and insecure about their future and way of life.

The Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, representing almost half of the country, was officially incorporated into Nicaragua in 1894. Today this area is inhabited by Miskitus, Sumus, Ramas, Garifonas, Afro-Nicaraguans, and *mestizos* who came from the Pacific. Until 1894, the English recognized this land as "Mosquito" territory. The English arrived on these coasts during the time of the buccaneers (English pirates that preyed on Spanish trade ships), and they intermarried with the natives. They influenced our culture by giving us English last names, imposing a new religion, and promoting their monarchy. History tells us that the English imposed four kings and eleven chiefs on the Miskitus.

History was repeated in 1982 when the Sandinista government in Nicaragua relocated people from the Rio Coco by force, in accordance with a unilateral decision guaranteeing its own political interests.

This resulted in an uprising in defense of our ancestral Indigenous rights.

As a move towards autonomy, the Congress under the Sandinista government approved the Autonomy Statute Law for the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua in September of 1987. The government of President Violeta Chamorro ratified the Autonomy Law, but did not consider it a priority. As a consequence, its enforcement stagnated. Nevertheless, for the people of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, it provided the answer to our struggle for ancestral rights. Soon after in Honduras, Indigenous people began to question their real identity, since they are of the same origin as those in Nicaragua. This illustrates that the Rio Coco border line makes no sense for us as Indigenous peoples.

The Autonomy Law needs to have a serious program of implementation. Buying seeds for agricultural production, either for household consumption or for the market, is a priority for the region. Until now, the presence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the communities has partially alleviated their immediate needs. By contrast, economic activities that affect natural resources like agroforestry and concessions for the exploitation of lumber, minerals, and marine life, are

Amalia Dixon is a Miskitu woman from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, a board member of Abya Yala Fund as well as the Miskitu organizations Panapana and FURCA.

"What keeps us together as a people is our spoken language and our social structure in which community practice persists."

all in the hands of the central government. Today, mining companies have returned to this area and are repeating the past history of exploitation. The central government and multinational companies have also signed several accords that do not contain positive development plans for Indigenous communities. The presence of these companies means minimum wage work, conditions of economic exploitation, and ecological destruction for Indigenous peoples. The Sumu people, for example, have endured serious environmental impacts. Several rivers like the Bambana are already contaminated. In the end, the Autonomous Government has very little participation and decision-making power in these negotiations.

Meanwhile, the subscription of the Nicaraguan government to the new policy of the ESAF (Economic Structural Adjustment Facility) has deepened the economic crisis of the Atlantic Coast peoples. The government subordinates all deals and national resources, like minerals, lumber, and marine life to privatization. In other words, it does not offer alternative strategies for the betterment of our people. Only 20 percent of the taxes that the companies pay are given to the Autonomous Governments of both the southern and northern regions for their administrative expenses. Recently, unemployment there has

reached 90 percent. This means profound limitations in agricultural production and little economic income for families. These economic limitations do not allow the autonomous government of the region to plan an appropriate development strategy that could produce qualitative changes.

In response to the economic fragmentation of Indigenous peoples caused by the war and the cultural confrontation with the Sandinista government (only since 1990 have our people begun to return to their places of origin from refugee centers located in

Honduras), the autonomous leaders of the Atlantic Coast are studying the implementation of a production system that would solidify our traditional economic system as an alternative strategy. It would attempt to alleviate our urgent survival needs, but keep us a unified community for years to come. What keeps us together as a people is our spoken language and our social structure in which community practice persists. We have lost our traditional way of dressing (many costumes have disappeared), but our struggle for self-determination is still ongoing. ☺



Amalia Dixon (right), a Miskitu Woman from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, is the incoming Director of SAILC.

State Frontiers and Indian Nations:

Commentary on Implications for the Mapuche and Indigenous Peoples



by Aucan Huillcamán Paillama

In cultures around the world, formal law often stands in antithesis to justice and rights. The Council of the Indies, an administrative structure that the Spanish colonial government imposed on what they deemed the "New World," legalized an oppressive system toward us as Indigenous peoples.

Historically, oppressive laws which states imposed by force suppressed persistent Indigenous uprisings in defense of our life, rights, and freedom. Today, many claim that times have changed. However, the formation of the current state has maintained the oppression initiated by these early colonial institutions. Not only were states established ignoring existing Indigenous territories, but state institutions have not been able to administer justice among Indigenous peoples.

It was not through carelessness or ignorance that the institutionalization of Spanish colonial legal systems clashed with Indigenous cultures. Many times they have made us believe, incorrectly, that through courts we can obtain justice. At other times we attempted to improve our position by submitting amendments to modify the state constitution. Although today the Chilean state has approved laws relating to Indigenous peoples, these have undermined Indigenous systems of justice.

While we are claiming our rights, justice, dignity and freedom, the ideology of colonialism continues to distort our reality as Indigenous peoples. Legal language continues to define us as "ethnic minorities" without defining the nature of our ethnic character. This ignorance reduces us to simple statistics. The state continues to deny our inalienable right to self-definition. This is a right that we as Indigenous peoples have never yielded. We have not given anyone the

right to define who we are.

An administrative division of lands carried out during the colonial period forms the basis of many of the current state borders. States, in turn, are founded through force and violence. In our perspective, we Indigenous peoples, as the real Nations, consider the founding of the nation-state as a perpetuation of our oppression. The *Criollo* (the colonial elite descended from the Spanish conquistadors) independence did not mean independence for us as Indigenous peoples. The colonial borders that were transferred to independent state boundaries are still only inventions, walls that separate Indigenous peoples. They are ideological, legal, political, and institutional walls. It is commonly said that "the walls have fallen in the modern world," and that we are quickly advancing to an integrated, developed, modern existence. Nevertheless, how do we define the walls that divide, for example, the Aymara Nation into Bolivians, Peruvians, Chileans, and Argentineans? The Mapuche Nation also has its own wall. Today, the Chilean and Argentinean border divides us.

Violence mars the history of the fragmentation of the Mapuche people. The Spaniards, upon entering Wallmapuche (Mapuche territory), imposed their will by force. Alonso de Ercilla, author of *The Araucanian*, describes the battles fought by the Mapuche in defense of their lives, dignity, freedom, and rights. Based in part on this information, the Spanish kings believed that there had been a war in Mapuche lands. Charles V made decisions based on the supposed War of Arauco, the name that the Spaniards gave to our Wallmapuche.

In 1641, before the Mapuche uprisings, limited Spanish military capacity forced the Spaniards to meet with the Mapuche. They established the first Parliament of Quillem on January 6, 1641. At this meeting they fixed the Mapuche territorial border at

Aucan Huillcamán is Werken, or spokesperson, for the Mapuche organization Aukin Wallmapu Ngulam-Council of All the Lands in Southern Chile

the Bio-Bio River to the south. Our territory then comprised eleven million hectares of land. The Parliament of Quillem also recognized our absolute independence in the interior of our territory. The Mapuche were forced to accept the introduction of missionaries into our territories during the summers. In addition, the colonizers requested the return of the Spaniards captured by the Mapuche.

The Mapuche demanded that the Spaniards retreat from Los Confines, which today is the city of Angol. Each time the Spaniards, in violation of the Treaty of Quillem, were militarily able to penetrate Mapuche territory, they did. After the Mapuches expelled them, they agreed to sign new treaties to delineate borders and support the political independence of the Mapuche people.

At the time of Chilean Creole Independence (1810), the Mapuche often supported the Spanish Creoles. During that period of our history, it was inconceivable that the Mapuches not ally with the independence process from Spain. Finally, the Chileans militarily invaded the Mapuche territory. This did not happen, however, until 1881; the Mapuche maintained their independence 71 years after the formation of the Argentinean and Chilean states.

To achieve the submission of the Mapuche people, the two states had to coordinate their military forces. In Argentina the military campaign was called the "Conquest of the Desert" ("desert" because whites did not live there), while in Chile it was called the "Pacification of the Araucania" (or, the "Pacification of the Savages"). Both actions were nothing short of the execution of state-sponsored genocide, sanctioned by their respective legal systems.

In 1883, Chile and Argentina permanently demarcated their state borders. In the logic of state structures, we Mapuches who remained under the jurisdiction of the Chilean state became Chileans. Those who remained under dominance of the Argentinean state became Argentineans. The unilateral actions of states are well known, and similar to the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* proclaimed by Pope Alexander VI when he divided Indian territories between the kingdoms of Portugal and Castilla in 1532.

In 1990, the Mapuche organizations existing under

Chilean and Argentinean state jurisdiction began a process of decolonization. To work toward this goal, we decided to revive the emblem of the Mapuche Nation. This action provoked reactions in many different socio-political sectors. Our traditional Mapuche authorities, however, were firm and clear. In their words, the "flag is not meant to deny anything to anyone, nor to impose on anyone, nor to invade other people. Rather, it is a flag which reaffirms our identity as a distinct culture. We accept that the Spanish and Chilean people exist, in the same way that we the Mapuche exist. Because of this, we have legitimate rights to manifest our culture, our reality. The Mapuche national flag is not a conquering symbol like the flag of Napoleon Bonaparte. To the contrary, it is a manifestation of our existence within human diversity, and therefore is fully legitimate and valid." One Lonko (a traditional Mapuche leader) said, "Now we have the following alternatives: To follow the flags of the state and of political parties, or the flag of the Mapuche Nation."

The most powerful tool that we Indigenous peoples have is that of consent. We have not resigned our fundamental rights. The day Indigenous peoples accept the concept of the state as a Nation will be the day we have given up our fundamental rights. We have consented to the state on one level when we participate in



Mapuche Lonko (chief) displays a flag symbolizing Mapuche unity across colonial borders.

their elections. To participate in that process is equivalent to the acceptance of a system that does not recognize us. It is also an ideological contradiction of our peoples, even if, frequently, it is the efforts of some determined leaders who push us in that direction.

Consent is our only tool for achieving change. States can continue to make laws and impose them; these will be invalid, for we Indigenous peoples have not expressed our willingness to conform. What states seek through their new colonialism is to involve us: They have designated it "participation through conference," as if the only right that we have is to be consulted. However, our true Indian liberation will begin when we assume our condition of immemorial identity, when we abandon the identities of the national states that dilute and disavow us. ☪

So That We, The Ye'kuana, May Inhabit Our Land

In Venezuela, the Ye'kuana nation has organized itself against a legal invasion. In 1978, the government of Venezuela, bypassing the Ye'kuana peoples, declared Duida-Murahuaca a National Park and Orinoco-Casiquare a "Biospheric Reserve." Until recently, however, other than declaring both areas under Special Administration, its implementation never occurred. According to the Ye'kuana, government bureaucrats have systematically ignored their historical presence and territorial rights make decisions on their behalf.

by José Félix Turón

Transcribed by Simeón Jiménez Turón

I have come to Caracas for the first time in my life because our land is being threatened. Where I live, along the source of the Cunucunuma River, I have heard rumors of invasions of lands close to us and of future plans to invade other lands in the area. Therefore, I, having always lived along the source of the Cunucunuma River, have come Caracas to write about the historical bases of our territorial rights. I will speak about the real owner of the land and about the origins of the land. This is how Wanadi gave us a piece of the Amazonian territory.

The Origins of Our Land

S/he who made the earth is called Wanasedume.

There was no earth

In the beginning

Wanadi (or Wanasedume) created the earth so that we, the Ye'kuanans, may inhabit it, care for it, feed off it, manage its resources, and so that we may die there. Wanadi said, "Take care of the land. It belongs to you; do not destroy it." That is how the land became ours.

The owner of the material necessary to make the earth was Mane'uda. With his material Wanasedume created the earth. He made it inhabitable.

That is how the earth was created.

In the Beginning

Wanasedume realized that people on earth had nothing to eat. S/he brought the yucca from the heavens, being the only one who knew where in the heavens it was. S/he first planted it in Roraima, so that everyone there could have food to eat. Wanasedume then realized that the Ye'kuanans, in their place of origin (Kamasoiña, north of the Cutinamo River), had no food. Where s/he first brought the yucca, Maarawakajaina, it did not grow. S/he then took it to the Cunucunuma River where it grew for 24 hours until it reached the skies. Therefore, we, the Ye'kuanans, consider as our land the territory that begins at the Cutinamo River, as well as the Cunucunuma, the Ventari, and the Manapaire River.

Wanadi gave the yucca to Kamasenadu. She was the owner of all food. Therefore, it is only the women, as the mothers or guardians of agriculture, who cultivate the earth.

Wanadi planted the yucca in the yard of a house that belonged to a man by the name of Tudumashaka. Many fruits were born from the trunk of that yucca tree. The fruits

were like rocks. The tree grew so big that no more yucca could be planted; people only ate the yucca that fell from the tree. Seeds and rain also fell. No longer able to grow upward, the tree grew sideways. Then the rock-hard fruits fell dangerously.

Tudunadu, son of Tudumashaka, died picking up fruit to eat. Some told Kamasenadu that people were dying, urging her to find a solution soon. Kamasenadu agreed, granting permission to cut down the tree. The chief of the felling was Yakawiyena. He visited neighboring villages and asked Waimene, a chief with workers, to help him. They worked one day and night but the trunk did not fall, one of its branches being hooked to the sky.

Kamasenadu was present at the felling to collect branches. Kamasenadu sent Wayuni (the moose) and Majadaku (the tiger) all the way to Mudumunuña to bring water back to the place of the felling. There, a number of other chiefs were now also waiting.

Seeing that the trunk was not falling, Kamasenadu sent Wadajaniyu to discover what was happening with the trunk above. Wadajaniyu returned, saying that he had no teeth and could not cut the branch hooked to the sky. Then,

Kamasenadu sent Kadio (the squirrel), who was like people, advising her to stand on top of the trunk so that she could come down the same way she went up while the branches fell off. Kadio was able to grab a fruit and save it in her mouth before chopping the branch with her teeth. The tree fell and the squirrel came down with it. Ever since then, the trunk of the tree is called Madawkajujo.

Kadio fell to her death at the foot of the tree in Tudumashaka's yard. The fall was so violent, her eyes welled up. This is why the squirrel's eyes are welled up. Kamasenadu quickly revived the squirrel by blowing on her.

When the tree fell, Wayuni and Majadaku were not present and therefore did not get fruit from the tree. The main branch fell toward chief Padamo. Majadaku, angry, threatened to eat people if he could not eat yucca. Wayuni, not having heard Majadaku very well, said that they would eat the leaves. Majadaku then said that he too would settle for leaves.

Kadio, after her revival, sat on the trunk with the fruit hidden inside her cheeks. She mocked Majadaku for not getting any yucca. Soon their insults turned to fighting. They placed bets on who could kill whom. The winner would take the fruit as a prize. Majadaku jumped from trunk to trunk. Kadio lay Majadaku a trap. She placed a loose rock on his path. Majadaku stepped on it and fell. All of those involved in cutting down the tree became animals: Majadaku (the tiger), Wayuni (the moose), Kadio (the squirrel), Wadajaniyu (the "tuqueque"), Nukoyame (the woodpecker), and Dakönö (the "tara larga").

The food which Wanadi gave to us was meant for the Ye'kuanans. All those who nowadays eat cassava took notice of where the branches of the tree of life fell, taking stems and sprouts from the branches. Some did not know how to properly cultivate yucca. The land surrounding the Autana River and the hills along its headwaters, and the land surrounding the Cutinamo, Padamo, Cunucunuma, and Ventuari rivers are apt for the cultivation of yucca. The lower regions (for example, the savannas of the Ayacucho Port, of the Esmeralda, or even the lands north of the Orinoco River) are not.

This is the story of the beginnings of the domestication of yucca and other foods native to the Orinoco and the Amazon region—foods that all of us, peoples of the Amazon, eat today.

Second Demarcation: Present-Day Boundaries of the Ye'kuana Communities

We, the Ye'kuanans, have lost a great deal of the land which Kujuyani left us as his sacred legacy. We must defend this sacred legacy in the same way other religious groups demand respect for their churches or places of worship. On our land, we, the Ye'kuanans, should not permit others to indiscriminately and disrespectfully frequent our sacred sites—as is the case in Madawaka, Duida, Autana, parts of Piaora, and in the Pemón region of Roraima.

During the months of March, April, and May, 1993, we the Ye'kuana communities of Culebra, Akanaña, Esmeralda, Tookishanamaña,

Watamo, Mödeshijaiña, and Huachamakare, met and agreed to establish our communities' boundaries and to demand state recognition of those boundaries.

Based on our people's collected memory—embodied or condensed in the historical wisdom of José Félix Turón—six communities were able to demarcate their lands according to the teachings of the story of origins. Thus, our occupation of the lands we now reclaim dates back many centuries. Our occupational rights precede the Europeans' arrival and the founding of the Venezuelan State. Some national constitutions of Latin America have acknowledged these rights, including Brazil (1988), Colombia (1991), and Paraguay (1992).

No declaration is more transcendental or powerful than our peaceful, productive, and conservationist occupation of the land that Wanadi and Kuyujani left in our custody.

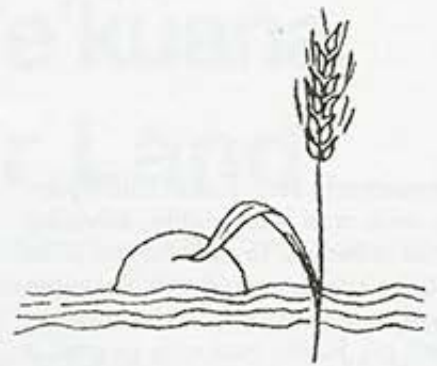
In this age of "preservation" and "sustainable management," it is imperative that the Venezuelan government respect our rights. Granting us legal rights to the lands we have occupied for centuries would not only be just and right, but also a guarantee for their "sustainable management."

We fear there could come a time when we will not be allowed to live off the land. We do not want that moment to arrive, since our lands are food, shelter, our life, and religion. To deny us our land would be to amputate our soul and our supreme reason for living. ☺

Based on an excerpt from Esperando a Kuyujani by Simeón Jiménez and Abel Perozo (Eds) San Pedro de Los Altos, Venezuela, 1994.

Salta, Argentina:

Electoral Politics Delay Granting of Land Title



The 4,500 Indigenous people of the Wichi, Chorote, Nivakle, Toba, and Tapiete communities in the northern Argentinean Salta region are still waiting for an official land title for the area where they traditionally live. They require a joint title for the five communities in order to continue living according to their traditional customs of hunting and gathering over a wide area, a way of life that does not allow land privatization.

In 1984, when they first demanded a land title, they were only offered separate titles for each family, which they refused. In 1991, the 27 communities of the "Asociación de Comunidades Aborígenes Thakas Honat" - ACATH (Association of Aboriginal Communities Thakas Honat) submitted a proposal (including maps) for the legalization of their land to the provincial government. This led the provincial government to pronounce the decree 2609/91 and give clearance to the redistribution of "a piece of land without subdivision and with only one land title,...and big enough for the development of their traditional way of life" to the Indigenous communities of districts 14 and 55. However, the redistribution of land has not happened yet and land conflicts are developing between the Indigenous communities and the local *criollo* smallholders, who have been increasingly using part of the traditional Indigenous area for the pasture of their cattle. Such conflicts

are not unusual in situations which lack agrarian reform. Instead of struggling for the implementation of agrarian reform, some smallholders tend to move into marginal or Indigenous areas.

Governments are duty-bound under the Right to Food to protect access to food for both marginalized smallholders and Indigenous people. This means that the implementation of agrarian reform and the protection of the Indigenous people promote conflicts among the very poor by encouraging the smallholders to move into marginal and Indigenous areas. The Indigenous communities' right to feed themselves is at stake as long as no legalization of their traditional territories occurs. According to recent information, the government is reluctant to implement the above mentioned decree before the forthcoming election. Furthermore, the government seems to plan to provide the Indigenous communities with a land title concerning only a small part of the original territory. This would mean a breach of article 75 and 17 of the Argentinean constitution and the ratified ILO convention 169, both guaranteeing the property of the traditional land where they live to Indigenous communities. As a State party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, Argentina, is also duty-bound to protect and respect the Indigenous communities' right to feed themselves.

Until a satisfactory solution is reached, and while the struggle continues, the Wichi, Chorote, Nivakle, Toba, and Tapiete people also face harassment and violence from those who oppose the redistribution of land in the area. In a formal declaration issued by ACATH, Indigenous leaders express deep concerns regarding the "threats that are continually being directed to our brothers and sisters, the wire fences that the *criollos* continue to put up on our land, the wood that continues to be taken illicitly and the burning of three houses by a policeman named Morón. All of these crimes go unpunished by the authorities. This makes us feel unprotected and neglected by the government." ☺

Support the Indigenous communities in the Salta region by writing letters encouraging the government to support the right to feed oneself and to provide a land title for districts 55 and 14. Send letters to:

Sr. Gobernador de la Provincia de Salta, Roberto A. Ulloa, Casa de Gobierno, Gran Burg 622, 4400 Salta, Argentina, Fax: 54 87 360 400.

Sr. Presidente de la Republica, Dr. Carlos S. Menem, Casa Rosada, Capital Federal, Argentina, Fax: 54 87 343 2249/331 7976.

Information provided by FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN).

Breaking the Myth of the Nation: Proposal for Autonomous Regions

While recent negotiations between the Mexican government and the Zapatistas progressed little, the fallout from the uprising has led Indigenous organizations and campesinos to consider autonomous regions. In this article, we present some selections from the proposal.

In 1994, various Indigenous organizations in Mexico including the Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations of Chiapas, the Guerreran Indigenous Council, the Independent People's Front, the Union of Indigenous and Peasant Communities of Izthmo, and the Yaqui Tribal Council met on several occasions to elaborate a proposal for the formation of autonomous regions. The proposal was aimed first at Indigenous peoples, later to be presented to the Congress of the Mexican Union.

Then, on April 9-10, 1995, a general reunion of Indigenous organizations gave rise to the Plural National Indigenous Assembly for Autonomy. Under the title of "Initiative for the Creation of Autonomous Areas," the assembly proposed to change certain articles of the Mexican constitution so as to allow Indigenous peoples in different regions to govern themselves.

In the "Considering" section, the proposal states that, "The Mexican State cannot, and must not, continue

to be structured politically as though Indigenous peoples do not exist. To correct this injustice, it is necessary to abandon the project of a homogeneous state and, in turn, put forth a new national project and constitution based on a federal system in which Indigenous peoples compose an organic element...

"The Mexican nation-state was organized in ignorance, or explicit denial, of Indigenous peoples. The various indigenist strategies practiced by the government, especially throughout the 20th century, were of such ethnocentric and centralist character that they are [today] the principal cause of misery and oppression [in Mexico]...

"In the states of Oaxaca, Veracruz, Chiapas, Puebla, Yucatan, Hidalgo, and Guerrero, 78 percent of the total Indigenous population lives. In some states, the Indian population is greater than that of non-Indians, such as in Oaxaca and Yucatan; in others, the Indigenous nuclei constitute more than one third of the total population, as in

Chiapas and Quintana Roo. Out of all the municipalities of the country (2,403), one third, or 803, are municipalities with one third or more of Indigenous population. Close to 30 percent of all localities, or 44,218, have an Indigenous population, of which more than 13,000 are qualified as "eminently indigenous localities" as a consequence of having 70 percent or more of persons speaking an Indigenous language."

Antonio Hernández is a Mayan Tojolabal of Chiapas and has been Secretary General of the Central de Obreros y Campesinos Agrícolas de Chiapas (CIOAC- Central Union of Workers and Agricultural Peasants). In the last elections, he was elected as national deputy, and remains one of the most active promoters of the proposal for Autonomous Regions. In a speech in front of the Congress in November, 1994, he stated:

"We want to contribute to the foundation of a democratic and plural state... Open your minds and your hearts to the Indigenous demands for autonomy. There will not be complete democracy in our country while a decentralization allowing our self-governing is not included in the organization of the state. ☺

The next meeting will occur in Oaxaca on August 25-26, 1995

CICA: A Pan-Indigenous Organization in Central America

by Atencio López (Kuna)

On July 21, 1995, in the city of Guatemala, the Indigenous Council of Central America (CICA) was founded, which integrates indigenous representatives from Guatemala to Panama, including Belize.

The initiative to found the Council was born during a reunion in Panama held in June, 1994. There, attendants agreed on the urgent necessity for Indigenous

peoples in Central America to coordinate their efforts on a regional level to defend their rights in the face of the political and economic structural changes stemming from the democratization process.

The founding of CICA is particularly important as it occurs during a time when dialogue and pacification follow the civil wars that have impoverished our countries and impacted most strongly in Indigenous communities.

CICA will also facilitate the Regional Program for the Support of Indigenous Peoples in Central America (PAPICA) organized with the European Community which makes available approximately 8 million dollars.

CICA staff includes: Leopoldo Tzian (Maya-Guatemala), President; Mauricio Castro (Zicaque-Honduras), General Secretary; William Borregón (Emberá-Panama), Treasurer. ☺

For more information, contact: CICA, in care of COMG, 2a. Calle 3-40, Zona 3, Chimaltenango, Chimalt. Guatemala. Tel/Fax: 502-9-392709

A Neoliberal State of Siege

On April 18, 1995, a series of strikes organized by Indigenous peasants and urban teachers forced the central government to declare a state of siege that has lasted three months. The international press has marginally covered this event. A state of siege is a serious menace to the concept of democracy and reminiscent of authoritarian rule. It is the first state of siege that neoliberalism could not avoid. In what follows, sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui interprets the reasons behind such measures and underlines the double moral standard of current politics in Bolivia.

by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

Democracy and violence are not incompatible terms or exclusionary in and of themselves. In Mexico, a solid clientelistic state structure serves as the base of the oldest electoral farce in America, while hundreds of thousands of rural Mexicans and Indigenous peoples die or flee from their country. In Colombia, democratic regimes elected according to various conventional norms have co-existed during more than a century with the most repressive and brutal military and paramilitary violence, and with the most varied forms of popular armed resistance. In the Bolivian Constitution, the "state of exception" permits a wide margin of arbitrary state power that remains partially within the legal bases of a legitimate republic. These are the "democratic fictions" that, historically, enabled the oscillation between democracy and dictatorship, and that in the present,

Silvia Rivera is professor of sociology at the Universidad Mayor de San Andres, Bolivia. She is a member of THOA (Andean Oral History Workshop), Chukiyawu, Kollasuyu (Bolivia).

lead to the consolidation of the "double moral standard" which is at the very heart of Bolivian democracy.



Bolivia is a country where there is democracy for the few and dictatorship for the many. Vast rural regions of Bolivia are subject to the law of "survival of the fittest," where open and concealed violence is a structural feature of modern daily life, exemplified by underdevelopment, displaced populations, extreme poverty, and a total loss of popular will. For more than a decade, untried killings and repression of Indigenous peoples in the Chapare region (the center

of coca cultivation) abound, and no one has been able to enforce the constitutional laws of the state. For centuries, thousands of Indigenous peoples, *mestizos*, *cholas*, and *bircholas* [urbanized peasants] have filled the Bolivian prisons. They are always the unyielding enemies, the silent threats to this "pigmentocratic" system in which whites or *q'aras* rule through a mandate that seems inherited from the depths of history.

Teachers and Cocaleros

Forty years ago, who would have thought that teachers and *cocaleros* (coca growers) would be the last remnants of the classic confrontation of Bolivian politics: a unionized sector—and here we know that unionization covers a wide range of sectors entrenched in a diverse Bolivian culture—and the formal country represented by political parties and the state. The gap between these sectors continues to grow, fed by constant violence. Here is why this last national strike and the call for the state of siege hides a vaster unease: the frustration of a people who voted hoping for

Photo: SAHIC



The Quechua and Aymara, who have been cultivating coca for thousands of years, are caught between the state and drug traffickers.

change, and who now see more of the same misery and repression that has not changed in centuries of *q'ara* domination of the Bolivian state. The ingenious conception of the "blank slate" inherent in all reformism blinded the government to this phenomenon of collective frustration over the design of a "New Bolivia," a project that, as in other times, runs the risk of remaining a propagandistic slogan.

Fundamentally, none of what was promised in the elections was accomplished, beginning with the promise of 250,000 jobs. Furthermore, Bolivia lacks even the minimal maneuvering power necessary to defend its once buoyant "illegal" economy (not only narco-trafficking, but also contraband and industrial pirating) that enjoys a flourishing stability in the North. How useful, then, is educational reform and popular participation if the pillar of the model promised (and discerned) by the ruling coalition is crumbling to pieces? Was it merely a calculation error? Or are we, as in other conjunctures, again witnessing the sad spectacle of an oligarchic blindness or myopia of the powerful, who lack the historic sense necessary to impose, among other things, a long-lasting legitimate rule because their language (and particularly their reformist language) has decayed into a parade of lies and linguistic run-arounds?

Nevertheless, the problem of

the double moral standard, and the fragile legitimacy it supports, is not only a ballast of the state and its leaders. I would say that it is a key feature of Bolivian political culture, and in this sense, constitutes us as actors and shapes our perceptions, behavior, and expectations. In this case, the lack of coherence in the actions and explicit demands of the COB (Bolivian Workers Union) and the teachers is evident. The teachers' resistance to yielding union-acquired privileges speaks more to corporate entrenchment than to authentic revolutionary unionism. What's more, the teachers are the main actors and principle obstacles involved in the renovation of our antiquated educational system. But who are the teachers? They are a product of the 1956 educational reform and, in this sense, also reflect the government of 1952—the same clientelistic methods, spheres of influence, and corruption. And who is the MNR (the ruling governmental party) to clean up the corruption of the educational sector? Who can really do it?

In the end, even the strike is inscribed in the double moral standard. While public schooling grinds to a halt, the same teachers who are striking continue to work diligently and profitably in the private educational institutions. So, are the Capitalists not the enemies of the Workers? Why doesn't the whole educational sector come

to a stop? Tragically, the most affected are the children of the very workers—rural and urban—who are the only ones left who depend on the devastated public education services. The rest—including a strained blue-collar and popular sector—support the private schools. They live as though in a different country, going to classes and dutifully following their curriculum, while the rest of us are striking. Among other factors, the professional and union conduct of the education sector has contributed to this insurmountable gulf that separates the rural from the urban, the upper and middle from the lower classes, and schools of the first, second, and last category.

Popular malaise and profound and legitimate collective frustration on one side, union members and politicians increasingly distant from the collective identity on the other—this all has contributed to the consolidation of a deeply conservative authoritarian political culture apparently totally resistant to change. The state of siege summarizes, therefore, the primary failure in the scheme of government reforms being carried out by the government, and at the least will leave it with the comfort of learning that no change is possible without the participation of the protagonist and affected majority. ☺

Excerpt from a longer text published in HOY (La Paz, Bolivia).

AMAZANGA

A Scientific Research Institute
in the Ecuadorian Amazon



In 1992, as a response to negotiations with oil companies attempting to expand their operations into the Pastaza region, the AMAZANGA institute was formed. Since then, it has been on the forefront of new attempts to incorporate and protect Indigenous knowledge of the environment. We recently had the opportunity to speak with Leonardo Viteri, director of the Amazanga Institute, and Quichua Indian from the Pastaza region of Ecuador.

Interview With Leonardo Viteri

Can you tell us about the Amazanga Institute?

Since the 1970s, a number of Indigenous organizations in Ecuador, like OPIP (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza), CONFENIAE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon), and CONAIE (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador), have come together, making important political and organizational advances. However, we have overlooked the very important areas of technology and scientific investigation. These would permit us to consolidate and strengthen our ability to negotiate and plan for the future of Indigenous peoples in terms of economic development, territorial protection, education, health and everything that an autonomous development really means.

In this vein, OPIP, an Indigenous organization in Pastaza, has worked to legalize Indigenous territory. Fifty-two percent of the 2.5 million hectares comprising that territory were legalized in 1992. This has given greater security to Indigenous communities, giving them more harmonious lives and assuring their future. Another 48% of Indigenous territory has yet to be legalized, so we're continuing our effort to have traditionally Indigenous territory recognized and legalized by the government.

Having legalized territory does not automatically solve Indigenous problems. It gives us many more commitments and challenges. We must manage the territory, protecting it and managing the natural resources in order to live there. In response to these challenges, in 1992 OPIP decided to create the Amazon Institute of Science and Technology (AMAZANGA). Indigenous knowledge which has developed over centuries is a fundamental pillar of

this Indigenous-run organization. This institute has been put in charge of the environmental planning of all traditional territories, focussing on their use and management in harmony with the existing natural resources. The research, application and development of Indigenous knowledge is necessary to achieve a level of autonomy. All the work of the institute leads to designing and planning a program of development for the Indigenous people of Pastaza. Our concept of development guarantees a harmonious advance of our people, both nationally and internationally. We want to prepare for the future of our people, to assure a dignified autonomous life beyond this century.

Basically, over the last 30 years we've been losing our autonomy, and that is what we want to regain and strengthen. We want to project ourselves before the country and international community with our proposals, our contribution to society, our technologies, our discoveries, and our knowledge.

What is the basic Indigenous knowledge that has allowed your people to live for thousands of years in harmony with the Amazon?

We Indigenous people have vast knowledge; this is what has allowed us to survive up until the present. First, holding of land is fundamental; based on our land, we can identify what we have as a people within that territory. Territory is the foundation that allows for unity among peoples. It guarantees the strengthening of cultural identity and allows us to be really autonomous. It also gives us validity as Indigenous people on this planet, providing us with natural resources which allow us to live in dignity without being overly dependent on others. The biodiversity which exists in our territory is so great that



Two thousand Quichua people from Pastaza marched to Quito in 1990 to assert their rights to control their territories and natural resources.

"We're trying to stop the proliferation of groups that have come to Indigenous communities lately to steal knowledge of medicinal plants, technology of forest and river management, etc."

only the knowledge we've attained over time lets us manage it equitably.

At least 80% of the resources the Indigenous communities of Pastaza have are from the rain forest and the rivers. A plan for the management of at-risk species is already established through AMAZANGA. We are also facing continuing pressures from economic interests such as logging, petroleum companies, and tourism. These economic development projects necessitate environmental impact studies. We should also develop contingency plans for salvaging deteriorated areas and for disasters such as floods, illness, and contamination.

Have you done research on the resources in your territory, such as its biodiversity?

Yes, we're starting those activities, especially inventorying our resources. Right now in the lower part of Pastaza we're inventorying flora and fauna, including fish, different wood species, medicinal plants, and pond-dwelling species. This research will direct proper management of these resources.

Is there community participation in these plans for research, resource management, and development?

Without community participation, there is no research. Although AMAZANGA technicians are systematizing Indigenous knowledge, they can't invento-

ry all of it. Community participation is the backbone of the project, and communities should manage the natural resources. All the information comes from the community and is returned to the community to be applied.

There are currently projects for collecting Indigenous genes for scientific purposes. What stand does AMAZANGA Institute take on this issue?

The creation of the AMAZANGA Institute responds precisely to the need to prevent any project that would harm or control biodiversity or genetic resources of any kind. We oppose any kind of aggression against or appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and integrity. We're trying to stop the proliferation of groups that have come to Indigenous communities lately to steal knowledge of medicinal plants, technology of forest and river management, etc. We're working to develop respect for our knowledge, and our communities are well aware of the danger that this theft of genetic resources represents.

Lately we've heard about more complex projects like the Human Genome Project. For us, this is nothing less than an inhumane, insane project which assaults our peoples' dignity, the natural order, and goes against our beliefs and religion. Our job is to stop this type of project. ☺

Peruvian State Targets "Abandoned" Lands of Asháninka



Photo: Mino Eusebio Castro

After days of march, "displaced" Asháninka widows and orphans arrive at a community in search of protection from Shining Path violence.

Since about 1989, Asháninka communities in the Selva Central region of Peru have been the object of Shining Path guerilla violence. The civil war has led to increased colonization from the highlands into Asháninka areas. Faced with extermination, Asháninka communities have had to leave their lands, clearing the way for state-sponsored colonist land invasions. In this interview, Mino Eusebio Castro, vice-president of the Inter-Ethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rain forest (AIDSEP, a national coordinating body for Indigenous regional organizations representing over 500,000 Indigenous people living in the Peruvian rain forest), talks with SAIC about the people's hardships and their efforts to organize and save their communities.

Interview with Mino Eusebio Castro

Tell us about yourself and your community.

My name in my maternal language is Naaperori Shirampari Asheninka, in Spanish it is Eusebio Castro. I am Asháninka. The Asháninka are one of 63 groups that inhabit the Amazon region of Peru. Traditionally, the Asháninkas were a warrior society that controlled a magical area. We lived from resources such as hunting, fishing and trade with other Indigenous communities. But all that changed, and our history became conquered by lies and broken promises. We tried to reject tokens brought to us, but there were many abuses and violations. Our Indigenous rights were violated, and many of our women were raped. In some cases, we were enslaved.

What have been the major threats to the Asháninka?

The exploitation of lumber by colonists has resulted in much violence. The guerrilla groups Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso) and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) have also violated Indigenous rights. They have oppressed us and killed bilingual teachers and leaders. Although we tried to resist, we did not have sophisticated weapons. If we did defend ourselves and killed someone, the Peruvian Constitution declares that we would be tried as murderers. Thus by justice, we were between two fires as it is said.

When did the intrusion of the Shining Path into

the Asháninka communities begin?

It began in 1978 and 1979, and by 1980 there was incursion into our areas, not with violence, but with lies, so we would become their strength. By 1989, there was an uprising in the Pichis valley to reject the revolutionary movement. The MRTA kidnapped and killed our hero Alejandro Calderon. As a result, many leaders rose up to protest and counter this force. By 1991, we were able to expel all those guerrillas who had infiltrated the Pichis Valley.

The Shining Path entered our communities in 1993 which resulted in the massacre of the Chiriyari community in the region of Satipo. About 57 people were killed (see *Abya Yala News*, Vol. 7, Nos. 3 and 4). Presently, we have more than 39 communities that have disappeared. Many people have been displaced and are refugees.

We have organized ourselves into self-defense groups. We asked the military if they would be willing to collaborate with us to achieve peace. We want peace.

You have made an alliance with the military with a goal of pacification, yet, according to international information, many of the those killed have been as a result of the military. Do you have faith in the military or was it through circumstances that you had to make a necessary pact?

This is not our war. The military does not know who is who. We indicated that since we know the territory, we should help defend it, but we were not given sufficient arms to confront the guerrillas. Who cares when an Indigenous person is killed? No one. When one of the military dies, then it is another story. They are made into heroes. When an Indigenous person dies in defense of his territory, no one says anything.

What were the guerrillas and military disputing in the region?

Until now the struggle has been for power. The Shining Path wanted to gain more power by using the Indigenous people in the war against the state, but since we are dedicated to peace, we did not concede easily.

How is AIDESEP preparing for the defense of territories, for maintaining biodiversity, and assuring a future for the Indigenous communities of the Amazon?

In AIDESEP we have a program of establishing communal reserves. In the zone of Guayali, we have gained more than 100 property titles for the communities. There are still 80 left that need to be signed. There are many blocks through the Ministry of Agriculture because of lobbying of lumber companies.

In the new Peruvian Constitution, articles 82 and 83 have decreed that our lands can be seized if they are deemed "abandoned" by the state. They can then be bought by those who have the most economic power, like the petroleum companies.

Do you have lands that you consider abandoned?

Traditionally, for us there are no abandoned lands, because we view land space in an integral manner. We are trying to take initiative in protecting and in managing the rich biodiversity of the area.

What have been the major developments surrounding petroleum companies in Indigenous areas of the Peruvian Amazon?

The Candoshi community has been the most affected by oil exploitation. It is located in the northern region by the Marañon and Pastaza rivers. Occidental Petroleum has bought lot number four. The Candoshi reject this completely. AIDESEP and the Candoshi community have staged protests and put pressure on the government arguing that this was not done with the consent of the Candoshi community.

AIDESEP has sent letters of protest to Occidental Petroleum, yet their responses are vague, stating that they are concerned about the environmental impact. But a few months ago we verified that there was a major oil spill on the Pastaza River. This means that all the flora and fauna will be poisoned. In addition, the Candoshi will not be able to subsist on hunting and fishing. In the San Juan community, the oil company has been offering to pay people to relocate to another area. They have come in with clothing and medicine. The Candoshi general council declared that they do not recognize these actions as legitimate. They took back all the things given to the families, and the company was told to leave. This has created quite a reaction from the company as well as the Ministry of Energy.

Is there much contamination in the rivers?

There is mercury in rivers such as Madre de Dios. Some of the people have eaten contaminated fish and have become very ill. As you know mercury is deadly. In the Chanchamayo and Perene Rivers, there has been so much mineral waste that all of the fish have been killed.

Has a political movement formed to stop this contamination?

Various environmental and ecological organizations have tried to raise public awareness, but to date the government has not imposed any regulations to stop the dumping of mineral waste. ☺

Island of Chiloé, Chile: Huilliches Fight Lumber Company to Save Their Forests

"In these territories (being considered for exploitation), there live around 100 families. They belong to the communities of Incopulli de Yaldad, Tugüeo de Coldita, Piedra Blanca de Coldita, and Coinco. These communities have historically been threatened by companies that have wanted to steal our land. This is why, today, we make public our complaints to demand that the authorities respect our rights and those of all of our sisters and brothers in Chiloé." **General Council of Caciques of Chiloé**

Two lumber projects threaten to alter the ecological balance of the Island of Chiloé (located on the Pacific Ocean, west of mainland Chile), endangering the livelihood and way of life of the Huilliche communities that live there. Golden Spring, a multinational company based in Hong Kong, and the companies Hawerden and Los Parques, S.A., plan to exploit a combined area of about 179,459 hectares of Chiloé's forest.

Since 1993, the Huilliches have been trying to keep Golden Spring from acquiring 50,000 hectares of land in the island of Chiloé to complete its lumber projects, and from damaging the land that the company presently owns. Golden Spring's initial goal is to export round logs to the Asian market, especially Japan, Hong Kong, Korea and Taiwan. The second stage of the company's long-term plan is to build a plant in Chiloé for the production of plywood.

The company has declared that its plan for the exploitation of Chiloé's forest is ecologically sound and allows reforestation. However, the actions of Golden Spring up to now have been far from ecologically sound. Golden Spring began cutting down trees to build a road inside Tepuhueico almost two months before receiving permission

from the government agency (CONAF) that grants such permits. The damage to the land was so great and public outrage so massive, that CONAF fined the company \$20,727,562. However, the Huilliche community is not satisfied with this fine because of a series of factors. First, large companies have traditionally been able to forgo their responsibility in paying fines imposed by CONAF. Second, CONAF had originally denied Golden Spring permission to build the road based on earlier documentation that declared the area in question unfit for exploitation, but then changed its mind a few days later. Because of this abrupt change in policy, the Huilliches fear that the government sides with Golden Spring and will pursue the company's interest over theirs.

The company's intentions became a topic of hot debate among environmental and governmental agencies until, finally, in April of 1994, Judge Francisco del Campo issued an order to halt two of Golden Spring's project, namely, the widening of yet another road in Yerba Loza and the construction of a "piedraplén" (rock base) for the employment of a port in the Compu Stream in Chaildad. However, the order is useless since the widening of the road had been completed before the call to halt and the con-

struction of the "piedraplén" had been halted earlier pending a permit from the maritime authorities.

In April of 1994, CONAMA (The National Environmental Commission) and Golden Spring reached an accord in which Golden Spring agreed to commission a study of the environmental impact of its plan of exploitation of Chiloé's forest before it can continue to exploit any additional land. However, as environmental groups and leaders from the Huilliche community point out, the study should have been done before Golden Spring was allowed to buy land in Chiloé with the purpose of forest exploitation. Furthermore, Golden Spring is allowed to continue exploiting the land (135,000 hectares) that was already approved before the accord with CONAMA. Lastly, because the study is being financed by Golden Spring, CONAMA is powerless in making sure that a neutral party (like a university) conduct the study.

Golden Spring continues to this day its operations in Tepuhueico and is looking to buy more land in Chiloé. Its plan is to own about 50,000 hectares of forest in order to achieve its production goals. The Huilliche community of Chiloé is very concerned because, albeit public outcry, government intervention and the halt of some of its operations, it looks as though Golden Spring is confident it will be allowed to continue to exploit the forest in the manner they intended given the amount of money (so far, 8 million dollars out the 25 million dollars set aside for this project) they continue to invest in heavy machinery, vessels and personnel.

As if the threat of Golden Spring was not enough, the Huilliches also have to contend with plans for another project that would have devastating ramifications for their

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Chile, Upper Biobío:

Hydroelectric Power Plant Threatens Environment and Pehuenche Communities

The construction of the Ralco power plant on the Upper Biobío river, Chile, threatens to topple the river's fragile ecology and cut off vital access to water for nearby Pehuenche communities. A campaign led by the Pehuenche to stop the project is underway, but faces powerful opponents such as national energy corporations and international funding agencies.

Since ENDESA, Chile's biggest and most powerful electrical company, began to design a series of six interdependent hydroelectric power plants on the Biobío River in the 1960s, the Ralco power plant has been considered the "key component" of this ambitious hydroelectric project.

When the campaign to save the Biobío River began, ENDESA and the CNE (The National Energy Commission) denied that they were planning several short-term projects along the Biobío River. For example, they presented an earlier project, the Pangué power plant, as an independent project, completely divorced from Ralco or any others. An accomplice to this tactic was the IFC (The International Financial Corporation), an entity affiliated with the World Bank. The IFC provided \$100,000,000 in funds for the construction of Pangué. ENDESA and CNE deceived the public about the real number of proposed plants as a tactic to minimize the public's fear of negative effects from the power plants in the region. Considered independently of each other, the harmful effects of the power plants appeared to be less severe.

Independent investigations reveal that if Ralco becomes a reality, it would have detrimental social and environmental effects on the Upper Biobío region. With the dev-

astation of 5,597 hectares of land, at least two Pehuenche communities (Quepuca Ralco and Ralco Lepoy) with a combined total of about 650 families will have to be evacuated from their territory. ENDESA has promised to give them land for resettlement and jobs in the construction project. However, the Pehuenche communities have



The proposed Ralco Hydropower project raises serious questions of ecocide for the Biobío watershed and the Pehuenche

rejected these offers to preserve their communities. The Pehuenche derive their income from subsistence farming and the sale of cattle and crafts. The proposal offers them little more than temporary labor as unskilled workers in the power plant's construction.

Pangué, S.A. (the company in charge of Pangué through its Pehuen Foundation) has also instituted a system of credit (i.e. debt peonage) by which members of the Pehuenche communities of

Quepuca Ralco and Ralco Lepoy may buy items needed for their home, such as stoves, pots, and other items. However, to acquire these items, the members of the communities must register their names with the company. The Pehuenches rejected this program because of fear that their signatures will be used by Pangué, S.A. as proof that the Pehuenche communities acquiesce to the building of the hydroelectric plant.

The environmental effects of the Ralco hydroelectric plant will be devastating. Estimates indicate that about 3,400 hectares of native forest would be flooded, affecting about 45% of the fauna and 60% of the flora. The creation of an artificial lake would endanger about 8 species of fish, 9 species of reptiles, 10 species of amphibians and 27 species of mammals. Humidity in the area would increase, affecting crop production and altering the region's micro flora and micro fauna. The humidity would also help increase soil erosion. The effects of toxic gas emission and toxic sediments are still to be determined. But given the magnitude of the project, they would undoubtedly be environmentally and economically catastrophic.

Because of Ralco's negative impact on the Pehuenche communities and the environment, it would seem that Chile's Indigenous Law and the Environmental Bases Law should be able to stop its construction. The Indigenous Law (No. 19,253) establishes norms for the protection, promotion and development of ethnic communities. It states that Indigenous land cannot be "annexed, mortgaged, levied or repossessed except for Indigenous communities or persons..." (Art. 13).

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Brazil: Macuxi People Oppose Building of Dam

The Raposa/Serra do Sol region along Brazil's border with Venezuela and Guyana is home to 11,000 Macuxi and 3,000 Ingarikó Indians. Like other Indigenous peoples throughout Brazil, the Macuxi have been seeking demarcation of their land. FUNAI, the government's Indian agency, identified their land as Indigenous in 1993, but the government has not yet signed the order. Meanwhile, gold miners and squatters have invaded the Macuxi's land, bringing malaria to the region and destroying the environment. At the same time the Macuxi and Ingarikó have successfully campaigned against a dam project in their region that would have flooded nearly 4,000 hectares of land. This dam would have changed their traditional lifestyle and severely limited their freedom to hunt, fish, and gather.

In 1992, the state electricity company (CER) began to study the Indian lands known as Raposa/Serra do Sol for a hydroelectric dam project on the Contingo River. The study claimed that only 45 Indians would be affected. Alternative studies maintain that 3,400 Indigenous people would be affected by the construction of the dam.

The Macuxi campaign to stop construction of this dam was met with force by the state military. On January 7, 1995, 50 Roraima state military police and seven members of the army invaded the Tamandua livestock holding camp of the Macuxi Indigenous community of Caraparu II in order to illegally

expel nearly 400 men, women, and children from their land. Two Macuxi Indians were severely beaten. Others were kicked, harassed, and detained. The police destroyed three houses, a cattle corral, and a livestock pen.

The following week, 170 Macuxi returned to the livestock holding area and began to work there. Twelve military policemen came and destroyed hammocks, food, and cooking implements. When the Macuxi attempted to stop this destruction, the police allegedly beat several Indians and fired at their possessions.

In protest of this expulsion, Macuxi communities from other parts of Roraima gathered at Caraparu II. Federal police report that military police have intimidated Macuxi communities by flying over their villages in helicopters and pointing weapons down at the Indians. According to a statement released by the Indian Council of Roraima state, "The motive for the invasion was to guarantee the construction of the hydroelectric dam on the River Contingo."

The Macuxi persisted in their opposition and sent a delegation to the federal capital of Brasília to protest the violence the state military police of Roraima used against them. They also demanded immediate demarcation of their lands. On March 17, a federal court issued a restraining order halting the construction of the Contingo River dam project. But the Macuxi land has not yet been demarcated. Army personnel sent to Raposa/Serra do Sol to protect the Macuxi have

sided with the gold miners and squatters, and have continued to intimidate Macuxi people.

Because of the activities of the gold miners, fish in nearby rivers have disappeared, and those that remain have high levels of mercury. In addition, the stagnant pits of water left by miners have introduced malaria in epidemic proportions. Malaria has become the main cause of death of the Macuxi.

Throughout Brazil, Indigenous peoples continue to fight for land demarcation. Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso has the power to sign into law the rights of Indigenous peoples to their traditional ancestral lands. Because of pressure from local politicians, he has not yet signed this decree. ☺

SAIIC has sent faxes supporting the Macuxi's demand for land demarcation and denouncing human rights abuses. We encourage you to do the same. Please write letters demanding that the Brazilian government demarcate traditional Indigenous lands to:

President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Palácio do Planalto, 70.159-970, Brasília DF, Brazil, Fax: 55 61 226 7566

Exmo. Sr. Ministro da Justiça, Sr. Nelson Jobim, Ministério da Justiça, Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco 23, 70.064, Brasília DF, Brazil, Fax: 55 61 224 2448

Send copies showing your support to:

The Indigenous Council of Roraima, Conselho Indígena de Roraima, Caixa Postal 163, 70.300 Boa Vista, RR, Brazil

Information from Amnesty International's Urgent Action Appeal, CIMI (Indianist Missionary Council), SEJUP (Serviço Brasileiro de Justiça e Paz), and the Urgent Action Bulletin of Survival International.

"We Must Combine Our Efforts"



In recognition of the similarity of the struggles Indigenous women face around the world, we recently had the privilege of talking with Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, a Kankanaey Igorot from the Cordillera region of the Philippines. She is the past chairperson of the Cordillera Peoples' Alliance, a coalition of Indigenous peoples in the Cordillera, Northern Philippines. She is Executive Director of the Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center, Inc., an NGO doing education, organizing, and projects among Indigenous women in the region.

Interview with Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

Tell us about the founding of the Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center.

Indigenous peoples in our region of the Philippines began to organize in the mid 1970s when the World Bank funded construction of four large dams along our Big Chico River. This project would have relocated 300,000 Bontoc and Kalinga peoples, but these people successfully fought against it. After this struggle, organizations were started on the local and provincial levels. The Cordillera Peoples' Alliance, which is the regional federation of these organizations, was organized in 1984. Although women were very much a part of this struggle, they didn't have their own organizations. So in 1985, we thought it was time to organize our own women's center to train women to become leaders in their own right. We created The Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center and took the lead in establishing organizations in the region.

What is the primary purpose of the Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center?

First, we wanted our women to take a more active role in the struggle for the defense of our ancestral lands and for self determination. So we attempt to bring in more women and educate them on these issues. At the same time, we are aware that women are marginalized. In our traditional communities, Indigenous decision-making structures are very male dominated. We felt this was not good for women, and therefore efforts should be made to improve this situation. Women must be equipped to participate more effectively in the community decision-making process. And thirdly, in many of our communities agriculture, which is the main economic activity, relies heavily on women. But when it comes to cash crop production, or when corporations hire, women are marginalized. When, for instance, the mines hire workers, they hire

only men, and the women become housewives. As housewives, women are not part of the community's economic activity as they are when they are subsistence farmers. We are studying how these modern developments have further marginalized women.

Tell us more about the traditional role of women in your community.

Well, as I said, the women are the subsistence farmers. They are the ones who fetch water, keep the seeds, and take care of the children. Childrearing is sometimes shared since women go to the fields, then the men stay in the village and take care of the babies.

Where do you believe machismo, or male domination, came from in your society?

For us, as the majority population, machismo was introduced by colonization. Before colonization, although they were not part of the formal decision-making process, women were consulted about their opinions. When the colonizers came, they declared that women should stay home and take care of the children. That was not our traditional belief; housework was shared. The male-dominated beliefs of our colonizers seeped through our communities. For instance, we had a courtship system in which women could also do courting, and martial separations were permitted with appropriate grounds. When the colonizers came with their religious beliefs, they told us this could not be, that it was immoral and that we could not separate from our husbands. Our colonizers brought and reinforced male domination in our traditional societies.

Do Indigenous communities in the Philippines have recognized territories?

We occupy our land, but the law states that our land is public land. We have a law in the Philippines which

says all lands that are 18% slopes or above are considered public lands, and therefore cannot be owned or sold. Almost all our lands are 18% slopes or above. Because of that law, virtually all the people in our community are considered squatters on our own lands. So we are working to have that law repealed. In 1986, when there was a constitutional commission, we lobbied to put a clause in the constitution recognizing ancestral land rights of Indigenous peoples. That law was incorporated into the constitution, but until a bill enabling and defining the law is passed, we legally do not have an ancestral land law in our country.

What other crucial issues are facing your community?

There are still ongoing logging operations. The logging companies attempt to drive people away from their land. However, mining is one of the biggest issues that we face because our region is very rich in minerals. Seventy-five percent of gold exports come from our region. The government is relaxing the laws to allow corporations to invest and open mines. These corporations receive 75-year leases. They operate strip mines and open pit mines. We have been resisting further expansion of these mines.

The Philippine government ratified GATT last December. How will this affect Indigenous peoples?

It will have a tremendous affect on Indigenous peoples, especially in terms of their rights to their lands. It will make it very easy for the government to say that since they are a signatory to GATT, we must open our land for investments. They also have been encouraging us to produce cash crops like cut flowers and asparagus. With the production of cash crops, our agriculture shifts from subsistence production for domestic consumption to producing high-value crops. This will force our agricultural production to become part of the entire world's market economy.

How is the Human Genome Diversity Project affecting Indigenous communities in the Philippines?

Some Indigenous peoples have been targeted for genetic collection, and some collection has probably already occurred. On the list of the Human Genome Project we have the Ifugawes, who come from our region; my own tribe; and the Aetas, a group of Indigenous peoples from the Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, and from the Visayas. Late last year we got a copy of a letter from Dr. Camara, one of the medical doctors from the Aloha Medical Mission of Hawaii, wherein he enclosed a letter from Hoffman-La Roche,

asking that they be allowed to participate in their medical missions to the Aetas in Pinatubo. Their intent was to collect DNA materials from the Aetas by collecting blood, mucosal scrapings, and hair roots. This sounds very much like the Human Genome Diversity Project. I find this grossly unethical and immoral, because what they plan to do is to participate in a humanitarian mission to the Aetas who were displaced when the Pinatubo volcano in the Philippines erupted. So, in effect, they are using a medical mission to obtain genetic resources.

We did work with the Foundation on Economic Trends (FET) in Washington DC. who filed a petition on behalf of itself and other organizations, including our own, for a moratorium on the Human Genome Diversity Project which at the time was promoted by the National Institute of Health in the US. So the FET filed a suit against them, but the whole project was transferred to the National Science Foundation (NSF). Suing the NSF will be more difficult because they are a semi-private, semi-governmental organization. These are the steps we have taken to pre-empt the attempts of the project to gather genetic material.

Do Indigenous peoples in the Philippines deal with issues similar to those of other Indigenous peoples around the world?

We really have many issues in common, like ancestral land rights, traditional ceremonies, autonomy, and self government. Because of that communality, we were able to combine efforts to contribute to the draft the UN working group on Indigenous peoples developed. We should not underestimate what our lobby contributed to that draft.

Do you have any messages for women in Mexico, South and Central America?

We were part of the group that organized the International Women's Conference held in Samiland (in Norway) in 1990. As a result of that conference, we developed a resolution saying we would do regional organizing among our women. Latin American women did their own organizing, which I think is great. On our part, we built up our Asian Indigenous women's network. Now we must combine our efforts and come together again so we can produce an excellent Indigenous Women's Agenda to be presented at the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in September. We should make an effort to outline the issues of Indigenous women, whether they are in the North or the South, and then present these issues. We can also sponsor a series of activities in Beijing where Indigenous women can speak out. ☺

A Cultural Exchange: Quichua Potters From Ecuador Visit

by Suzana Sawyer

Bacha Gualinga Cuji and Leona Inmunda Nango, two Indigenous Quichua female elders from the tropical forest region of eastern Ecuador, recounted the story of how Nunguli, the forest spirit which lives below the earth, entrusted women with clay to sculpt into pottery. Their Spanish bore the distinctive lilt of those whose first language is Quichua. With hands knotted from working the earth nearly daily for fifty years, Miquia Bacha and Miquia Leona molded *mucahuas* (drinking bowls) and told the tales from their mothers and grandmothers. They spoke with pride of their culture, the threat of petroleum contamination and the recent border war with Peru.

The Bay Area was Bacha Gualinga and Leona Inmunda's second stop on a four city Quichua Potter's Cultural Exchange tour organized by OPIP (Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza) and Fundación Jatari, a small foundation established in 1978. Since its inception, Fundación Jatari has been dedicated to enhancing the educational opportunities of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The 1995 Cultural Exchange Tour is the second consecutive year in which Quichua women have come to share their cultural knowledge and build interchange with the North. Their visits to Minneapolis, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe have allowed them to forge networks and friendships with Native Americans in the US.

Chosen by their rainforest communities, Bacha Gualinga and Leona Inmunda came to the United States as spokeswomen in defense of their art form and ancestral territory. Quichua pottery is a millennial practice exclusive to Indian women. Through its delicate hand-coil form and intricate designs, Quichua pottery represents the intimate connection between

indigenous cosmology and rainforest sustainability. The clay, ocher, and resin materials used in their work, building and decorating Indigenous ceramics reflect the need to carefully extract and sustain resources in an uncontaminated environment. The cosmological imagery used in decorating the ceramics retell the numerous stories of forest spirits, or powers, essential to protect and maintain harmony among all forest beings, animate and inanimate. Nunguli, the spirit of fecundity, protects all cultivated plants. Amazanga, the spirit of strength, protects all forest animals.

Tsumi, the spirit of fluidity, controls the worlds of waters and its lives. And there are many more. Cosmological beliefs around these spirits—their temperaments, inclinations, and practices—guide sustainable practices used in agriculture, hunting, fishing, and forest and river management.

Miquia Bacha and Miquia Leona's ancestral territory consists of a 2 million hectares of uninterrupted primary rain forest in the central Ecuadorian Amazon Province of Pastaza. This is the last such expanse in Ecuador and the only place where women maintain the age-old tradition of Quichua pottery. OPIP is the Indian federation and organizational structure which has been fighting to protect this ancestral territory and maintain sustainable Indigenous management techniques for 16

years. Founded in 1979, OPIP represents 20,000 Indigenous peoples, dispersed in 133 communities. While gains have been made, the future of this territory and its people is uncertain.

In 1992, 2,000 Indigenous peoples from Pastaza embarked on a historic march from their rain forest communities to Quito to demand legal title to their ancestral territory (see *Abya Yala News* Vol. 6, No. 3). Miquia Bacha was a key player in this struggle. The only woman to address the President and his cabinet, Bacha Gualinga condemned the government for failing to legalize "the territory in which their ancestors have

Photo: Fundación Jatari/OPIP



Quichua women's pottery represents the intimate connection between Indigenous cosmology and rain forest sustainability.

Suzana Sawyer is a Ph.D. Candidate in Anthropology at Stanford University and has worked extensively with OPIP in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

always lived." While Indians in Pastaza returned to the lowlands after 5 weeks of negotiation with their territory adjudicated, titles included only surface rights to land and its products. Subterranean rights remain solely in the hands of the state to exploit. For twenty years, petroleum development has indelibly changed the social and ecological reality of the northern portion of the Ecuadorian Amazon through the construction of a network of roads and towns and the contamination of water and soil systems. If petroleum development is not controlled, this is the fate looming on the horizons of Indigenous territory in Pastaza. ARCO, the only oil corporation working in Pastaza, has discovered a sizeable reserve in Indigenous territory and hydrocarbon extraction is imminent, if the local communities and international pressure groups are not mobilized.

The struggle for land and Indigenous rights in Pastaza is not simply the concern of a politicized Indigenous elite. Miquia Abigail and Miquia Leona came to the Bay Area in representation of their communities and OPIP to speak in their own voices about their peoples' historical struggle in defense of their culture, beliefs, language, and way of life in the Ecuadorian rain forest. Standing before the San Francisco audience, Bacha Gualinga spoke on the wisdom of the ages: "I don't know how to read or write. Not even sign my name. Yet, I have here, captured within my head, years and years of history. I am here as a seed, as a root, as a tree. Look at me and learn." Tracing the intimate link between Indigenous peoples and a landscape, she added, "If Indians disappear, if our way of life is destroyed, what will happen to the

world? Then there will not be forest. The jungle will not be green."

In 1989, OPIP established a Women's Committee directed by and for Indigenous Quichua women to strengthen disappearing traditions and address women's needs. Female potters in the province of Pastaza currently sell their artware to OPIP's Cooperative store, Yanapuma (Black Panther), in the provincial capital of Puyo. Now, OPIP's Women's Committee wishes to explore possibilities for expanding the marketing of Indigenous ceramics. The US tour aims to provide Amazonian Quichua potters direct access to international alternative trade markets in the United States. The Women's Committee seeks to develop alternative trade networks as empowering opportunities to re-enforce the cultural tradition of the more than 3,000 women potters in the region and extend needed economic support. An example of grassroots organizing initiated and controlled by Indian women, the marketing of the Quichua ceramic tradition re-affirms the dignity their cultural identity by honoring indigenous female art and strengthening female voices. Organized during International Women's Month, the Quichua Potter's Exchange deepens a commitment for dialogue between women across the globe and expands international networks of mutual support and cooperation. ☺

For more information, contact: Fundación Jatari, P.O. Box 65195, Tucson, AZ, 85728, Tel / Fax: (520) 577-3642; or the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of Pastaza (OPIP), Casilla 790, Puyo, Pastaza, Tel / Fax: (593-3) 885-461.

Indigenous People form an Alliance to counter the Vampire Project

On February 18-19, 1995, a group of 30 Indigenous delegates from the United States, Canada, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru met in Phoenix, Arizona, to discuss an Indigenous response to the Human Genome Project. During the three days of discussion, the delegates decided to form an International Alliance to counter the Human Genome Biodiversity Project. Many Indigenous peoples call this "The Vampire Project" because its goal is to collect blood, tissues, and hair from about 700 Indigenous groups around the world.

The Human Genome Project is a proposal to collect and study the genetic structures of various ethnic groups. They have targeted populations "on the verge of extinction," and refer to Indigenous groups as "Isolates of Historical Interest." SAIIC and many other Indigenous organizations have taken a stand against this project because it is yet another example of research which North American and European scientists carry out on Indigenous peoples without their consent and without all of the relevant information being provided to them. This is a continuation of colonialism of Indigenous peoples which began 500 years ago.

The delegates at the Phoenix conference decided to make a plan of action to stop the Human Genome Project and its attempt against the biological, spiritual, physical, and psychological lives of Indigenous peoples. They formed a coordinating committee comprised of Indigenous people from North, Central, and South America. They are planning another meeting for next fall in northern California in order to continue this campaign.

The En'owkin Centre and Okanagan Indians in British Columbia organized this conference which Tonatierra in Phoenix hosted. Debra Harry, a Paiute Indian from Nevada, is coordinator of this project.

For more information, contact: Debra, at PO Box 6, Nixon, Nevada 89424, Tel: (702) 574-0309, e-mail dharry@igc.apc.org; or the En'owkin Centre, 257 Brunswick St., Penticton, BC V2R 5P9, Canada, Tel: (604) 493-7181 Fax: (604) 493-5302.

URNG-Government Dialogue: Indians Excluded Once Again

On March 31, Guatemala's government and the leftist umbrella guerrilla group National Guatemalan Revolutionary Union (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca, URNG) signed an accord to protect the rights of the Maya Indian people. As we reported in the last issue of *Abya Yala News* (see Estuardo Zapeta, "Guatemala Peace Talks: Are Maya Rights Negotiable", vol. 8, no. 4), these peace talks have excluded the Maya people who make up a majority of Guatemala's population. In the recently-signed pact, the government promised to promote constitutional reforms to recognize the Maya Indians, promote their rights, end racial discrimination and sexual harassment, respect traditional dress and languages, and promote bilingual education. Maya organizations greeted the pact as a cautious first step and stated that the effect that it would have on their struggle to achieve their demands remained to be seen. The following statement is from the League of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala (Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala, COPMAGUA, also known by its Maya acronym SAJB'ICHIL) on these negotiations.

COPMAGUA Statement on Peace Negotiations

The second Grand Assembly of SAJB'ICHIL, the League of Organizations of the Maya People of Guatemala (COPMAGUA), in view of the agreement "Identity and Rights of Indigenous People" which the Republic of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) signed on March 31, 1995, in Mexico City, having been asked to analyze the peace negotiations;

Concludes That:

1) This accord does not necessarily fulfill all of our aspirations and demands, but it is the minimal product of five hundred years of resistance, three decades of an internal armed conflict, and above all the struggle of the Maya people together with the support of the civilian population. It is one of the tools to begin the eradication of the social injustice, discrimination, oppression and colonialism that we suffer today.

2) This Agreement is a minimal but significant step to strengthen the hope of the Maya people to end the marginalization, oppression, discrimination, dominance, exploitation and colonialism that we suffer.

3) The Maya people will continue to work and struggle to achieve all of our rights and demands.

4) The contents of the Agreement will only be effective if all parties demonstrate the political willingness to comply with the terms of the agreement, with the full participation of the Maya people.

5) The leagues and organizations present at the signing of the agreement endow SAJB'ICHIL with the power to be the representative and voice of the Maya

people to all of the parties involved (the government, the army, and the URNG) to oversee the implementation and verification of the terms of the Agreement, as well as with international groups.

6) We recognize that the Agreement was in part made possible by the support of the United Nations as part of its Global Peace Process, as well as by the support of the group of friendly countries.

It Commits Itself To:

1) Disseminate fully the agreement, "Identity and Rights of the Indigenous Communities" to communities, villages and hamlets in the Maya languages through all of the possible means of communication.

2) Make all of the Maya organizations as well as the civilian population not only aware of the agreement, but also to involve them in its application and compliance.

3) Conduct consultations with its base organizations and other Maya organizations for the implementation of the necessary mechanisms and the compliance of the agreement by those who signed it.

Decides To:

Conduct its third Grand Assembly on B'ELEJE' NO'J (May 2, 1995) with the objective of making decisions regarding how to create work commissions to boost the agreement, as well as its functions and tasks. ☺

B'OKO', WAQI' Q'ANIL'

Chimaltenango, April 3, 1995

Mexico: Indians and Campesinos Massacred in Guerrero

A series of assassinations of Mixtec Indians topped with the massacre of 17 campesinos, has marked this past June as one of the bloodiest months in recent history for Indigenous and rural peoples in Mexico.

On June 10, Mixtec members of the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena (Guerreran Council of 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance) Perfecto González Rufino and Alejandro Tenorio Perfecto were assassinated, followed by the murder of member Rey Flores Hernandez on June 18, 1995. Then, on Wednesday, June 28, at a site known as Aguas Blancas in the Sierra of Coyuca de Benítez, approximately 70 policemen intercepted a passenger truck traveling to Atoyac, Guerrero, and began firing indiscriminately against the vehicle and its occupants. Of the roughly 60 campesinos traveling in the truck, 18 were confirmed dead. Eight people also disappeared and 19 people are gravely injured.

In both cases, the incidents are tied to the increased level of popu-

lar mobilization in Guerrero, one of Mexico's poorest states, with an Indigenous population of about 300,000 out of 2,650,000. In the first case, the murders are the product of the intolerance of regional cacique and municipal president of Tlacoachistlahuaca, Armando Ramos. A group of Mixtec Indians began a peaceful takeover there of the municipal building on May 22 to protest corruption and government indifference towards the needs of Indigenous communities. In the second case, some of the passengers belonged to the Organización Campesina de la Sierra Sur (OCSS-Peasant Organization of the Southern Sierra), and were on their way to a demonstration in Atoyac. There, on May 18th, members of the OCSS had prevented the exit of local authorities from the municipal building during the 28th anniversary of the initiation of the Lucio Cabañas uprising.

As a result of the massacres, tensions between state authorities and campesinos in Guerrero have reached a boiling point. Peasants have formed a popular commission

for the resignation of state governor Rubén Figueroa Alcocer, who appears to have been informed of the police action prior to the incident. The coalition faces a powerful opposition that the ruling PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) deputies mounted in support of Figueroa. In addition, on July 1st, what may have been members of OCSS ransacked and attempted to burn down the municipal palace in Coyuca de Benítez, site of a number of large popular protests denouncing the incident.

Two state police agents and 8 local policemen believed to have been involved in the incident have been detained and are presently awaiting trial. State attorney Antonio Alcocer Salazar has also accused members of the OCSS, including leader Benigno Guzmán Martínez, of "engaging in criminal conduct" in relation to the June 28 massacre. He also accused the OCSS of "theft of public property, destruction of communication lines, and causing harm to society" during various OCSS activities in 1994. He did not clarify what "criminal conduct" he was referring to, however. ☸

Information from Consejo de Pueblos Nahuatl and La Jornada

Chiloé Forests

Continued from page 26

communities and the ecological balance of the island of Chiloé. In May 28, 1994, the General Council of Caciques of Chiloé announced their knowledge of a document called: "A Study to Identify the Possibilities of Forest Exploitation in the Area known as Puerto Carmen—Big Island of Chiloé," commissioned by Los Parques, S.A. and Le Banque Colbert of France.

In the study, researchers consider the exploitation of 129,459 hectares of land located at the southern tip of the island, in the township of Quellón, with an annual deforestation of about 150,000 square meters.

This project would use up about 37% of all the forest in Chiloé, with an annual deforestation volume equivalent to 5 times the current annual serrated wood production in Chiloé and 3 times the consumption of firewood. Wood production in Chiloé would double as a result of this project.

According to these facts, the project (officially called, "Plan Astillas Puerto Carmen"), which is already being considered by the regional and provincial authorities, would become the first industrial exploitation of Chiloé's forest. This would mean the total transformation of all life forms in the island's ecosystem and a real threat to the survival of many species in it. The General Council of Caciques of Chiloé consider implementation of this project a violation of Indigenous people's ancestral rights. ☸

New Medium Reinforces Movement

Computer Networking and Indigenous Organizations

When Peru and Ecuador began military skirmishes on their shared national border, SAIIC received via email a statement from CONAIE denouncing the fighting and calling for international assistance for the Indigenous communities in the conflictive area.

This is only one of an increasing number of cases in which Indigenous activists are beginning to utilize computer networks. Computer networks can be used to educate people about Indigenous realities and to build stronger organizations. The Internet, a system of inter-linked computer networks which stretches around the world, is becoming a powerful organizing tool for Indigenous organizations and communities.

At this point it is relatively rare for Indigenous organizations in the South to utilize computer networks to advance their goals. Some people have a romantic attitude toward Indians and Western technology, and argue that people are less Indian if they use computers. But as an Aymara from Bolivia has argued, we will not be less Indian because we are using a computer. It is a tool, and it can be used in a positive way to achieve justice and liberation for our people.

The telephone, and then the invention of the fax machine revolutionized communications throughout the world. For Indigenous activists, faxes improved communications between organizations and with support groups in North America and Europe. Faxes, however,

require expensive international calls which limit their usefulness. Computer networks represent a new technological breakthrough which completely changes the form in which we communicate. Today, with a computer and a modem (which are becoming cheaper and easier to use) it is possible to maintain virtually immediate contact with people around the world. Normally, it is possible to connect to the Internet with a local call and maintain contact with people around the world without spending money on long distance toll charges.

Indigenous activists are now taking these means of communication into our own hands. SAIIC has always been committed to the goal of communicating to the public an Indigenous perspective on issues which affect us. We have accomplished this through various means of communication such as *Abya Yala News* and urgent action alerts distributed through mailings and by fax and phone. SAIIC is now making the transition to using email and Internet resources to achieve these same goals. We can use this technology to educate others about our reality and to mobilize international public opinion against human rights abuses and on other issues which we face. We should also look for ways to use computer networks to more effectively communicate among ourselves in order to share information and to develop organizing strategies.

Computer networking resources can be divided into three main categories. First, private messages called

In the last issue of *Abya Yala News* (Vol. 8, No. 4), two short stories about SAIIC's efforts to use computer networks and the Internet to advance its organizing work included incomplete or misleading information. On the News from SAIIC page (p. 39), there was a typo in the name of SAIIC's PeaceNet conference. The actual name is "saic.indio." Also, SAIIC's Home Page on the World-Wide Web is at <http://www.igc.apc.org/saic/saic.html>. You can find an electronic copy of SAIIC's brochure by pointing a gopher client to gopher.igc.apc.org and selecting "Organizations on the IGC Networks Gopher" and then "SAIIC." The brochure is also available in the ftp.igc.apc.org FTP site in the "pub/orgs_on_igc" directory and by sending an email note to "saic-info@igc.apc.org."

Also, a story on the Internet for Native Peoples Conference (p. 35) did not include complete information for subscribing to these lists related to Indigenous issues (please note that the -I in saic-I and native-I is the letter "I" and not the number one):

saic-I (send a message "subscribe saic-I" to majordomo@igc.apc.org; this list mirrors the saic.indio conference)

Indigenous Knowledge (send a message "sub indknow <Your Name>" to listserv@u.washington.edu)

NativeNet (send a message "sub native-I <Your Name>" to listserv@tamvm1.tamu.edu)

In addition to these lists, Internet users may wish to check out the following electronic archives:

NativeWeb (<http://ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu/~marc/nativeweb.html>)

Fourth World Documentation Project (<http://www.halcyon.com/FWDP/fwdp.html>)

Native American Net Server at UW-Milwaukee (gopher to alpha1.csd.uwm.edu and select "UWM" then "Information" and finally "Native American Net Server")

Native American FTP site at Cornell University (ftp to ftp.cit.cornell.edu and change to the pub/special/NativeProfs directory)

If you have any questions about any of these items, please contact Marc at the SAIIC office.

email (or e-mail, which is short for electronic mail) are sent through computer networks. This correspondence is similar to the regular mail, faxes, and phone calls which organizations such as SAIIC have traditionally used to communicate with board members, supporters, and other organizations. The advantage of email is that it allows the sending of mail messages and computer files virtually instantaneously and often cheaper than other means of communication.

A second broad category of information on the Internet is that which is distributed via listserv lists, PeaceNet conferences, Usenet News Groups, etc. They operate like newsletters to which people subscribe and then receive regular mailings. These subscription lists are useful for distributing news reports, urgent action alerts, announcements and other information which may be of a dated nature. It is for these purposes that SAIIC established the saiiic.indio conference on PeaceNet last fall.

A final broad category of information available on the Internet is that found in electronic archives, including FTP, Gopher, and World-Wide Web sites. Organizations can use these archives to post an electronic copy of a brochure describing the group's work, manifestos and

declarations, past issues of newsletters, and other information which may have on-going value for the organization, its supporters, and the public at large. For example, SAIIC has placed a copy of its brochure on PeaceNet where people desiring more information on the organization can access it via FTP, Gopher, or the World-Wide Web.

Often weak infrastructure and the lack of basic services such as phone lines, particularly in remote areas, makes developing computer networks very difficult. In Africa activists are beginning to hook up to low-earth orbiting satellites in order to connect to computer network resources. For example, the NGO Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) has assisted organizations in remote areas of Tanzania where there is no electricity or phone service to communicate via email and the Internet. From most anywhere in the world, a person with the appropriate equipment can send and receive messages twice daily via a low orbit satellite. These low-earth orbiting satellites have not been used extensively in Mexico, Central and South America. Using this technology, Indigenous people can create their own computer networks in order to strengthen their organizations and defend their way of life. ☺

Native American Radio Talk Show Debuts

American Indian Radio on Satellite (AIROS), which started programming for and about Native Americans last fall to Native-owned and public radio stations, began a daily Native talk show on June 5.

George Tiger, Muscogee (Creek), hosts Native America Calling, a live call-in program that explores the full range of Native American life and culture, with topics such as tribal politics, art, music, humor, storytelling, gaming and religious freedom. The one-hour daily program can be heard on tribal and public radio stations in the United States each Monday through Friday at 1 p.m. Eastern time.

Native America Calling is produced at public radio station KUNM on the campus of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. It is a co-production of the Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium and the Alaska Public Radio Network.

Listeners can stay abreast of new programs developments and new stations

coming on line by calling the Native America Calling Hotline at (907) 566-2244.

Sixth Annual Indigenous Environmental Network Conference

One hundred and forty six Indigenous nations and organizations from the Americas gathered in Chickaloon, Alaska (June 19-22) for the Sixth Annual Indigenous Environmental Network conference. The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) organized this conference.

The goal of this conference was to unify Indigenous peoples in their work to protect the Earth Mother and its natural resources and strengthen Indigenous organizations.

During four days of the conference, participants gathered in seventeen workshops dedicated to themes such as territories, protection of natural resources, militarization, the Human Genome Diversity Project, and NAFTA. The final three days were

dedicated to the presentation of treaties on the rights of the Indigenous peoples.

For more information, contact: Indigenous Environmental Network, Tel: (218) 751-4967, Fax: (218) 751-0561.

Second Coalition Conference on International Health

Building on the enthusiastic response to the first conference held last November, the Canadian Society for International Health and the Canadian University Consortium for Health and Development will hold the second CCIH from November 12-15, 1995, at the Radisson Hotel in Ottawa. The conference theme is "Health Reform Around the World: Towards Equity and Sustainability." Sessions will include paper presentations, symposia, workshops, poster sessions, and round table discussions.

Contact the CCIH Coordinator at Tel: (613) 730-2654, Fax: (613) 230-8401, or e-mail: CCIH@fox.nstn.can.

Filling The Gap With Abya Yala Fund

The first foundation in the Western Hemisphere run by and for Indigenous People of South and Meso America.

Indigenous representatives from Mexico, South America, Central America and North America have established a new fund to support Indigenous communities and organizations that are organizing to guarantee the survival of our people.

A group of prominent Indigenous men and women have formed this Fund with the goal of enabling Indigenous communities to achieve self-reliance through locally-initiated improvement efforts. The Abya Yala Fund provides critical training in organizational development, communications, administration, fund-raising and project management. The Fund also gives grants and loans for small-scale community projects emerging from Indigenous communities and their organizations.

"We created the Fund due to our perception that a wide gap of communication and understanding exists between international funders and development agencies and Indigenous communities," said Leonardo Viteri, a Quichua from Ecuador and board member. There is also a great need for organizational development among Indigenous communities that traditional funding sources are not addressing.

To fill these gaps, Abya Yala

Fund works through local contacts to discuss directly with Indigenous people their priority issues and needs. By working with existing organizations and community projects, the Abya Yala Fund enables local residents to define their own priorities and helps the community access technical and financial resources.

On May 4-7, 1995, Abya Yala Fund held its second meeting in Oakland, California, with board members from South and Meso America as well as advisors from North America attending. In that meeting, the board developed a five-year plan for the organization.

The Abya Yala Fund has already received many proposals from Indigenous communities working on projects to protect the environment, land rights, human rights; to address women's issues; to support education projects; and to maintain the cultural integrity and spirituality of Indigenous Nations.

Nilo Cayuqueo, a Mapuche from Argentina and a founding member of the South and Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC), and Atencio López, a Kuna from Panama, are the Co-directors of the Abya Yala Fund. Luis Macas, a Quichua from Ecuador and winner of the 1994 Goldman Environmental Award, as well as other Indigenous

leaders from across the Americas are on the Board. Amalia Dixon, a Miskitu from Nicaragua and member of the Board of Directors, will help promote the Fund in the US.

Abya Yala Fund has established an office in Oakland, California, with the support of SAIIC. Until Abya Yala Fund receives its own non-profit status, the San Francisco-based Tides Foundation will be its fiscal sponsor. Abya Yala Fund has established contact with foundations and individuals who are very supportive of this unique initiative. In addition, the Fund has become a member of foundation networking organizations such as Native Americans in Philanthropy, Hispanics in Philanthropy, and the National Network of Grantmakers.

Monetary contributions are greatly needed for project support and operations. The Fund is also seeking the donation of computers and modems, in order to facilitate regular communication with Board members and local contacts in Mexico, Central and South America. Please send tax-deductible donations or information requests to: Abya Yala Fund, c/o Tides Foundation, P O Box 28386, Oakland, CA 94604, Tel/Fax (510) 763-6553. ☺

Amazon Forum II

The future of the Amazon depends on its Indigenous peoples and the state of their environment. The Coalition in Support of Amazonian Peoples and Their Environment held its second international forum in Washington, DC, at the Smithsonian's Museum of American History on May 10-12.

The meeting brought together North American non-governmental organizations with representatives from the Amazon Basin to coordinate long-term efforts on behalf of Indigenous and forest-dependent peoples. Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, Cesar Gaviria, and Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Interior, Ada Deer, gave keynote addresses at a reception welcoming participants on the evening of May 9th.

For more information on the Amazon Forum, contact: Melina Selverston, Amazon Coalition, 1511 K. Street, NW, #1044, Washington, DC 20005, Tel: (202) 637- 9718, Fax: (202) 637-9719, e-mail: amazoncoal@igc.apc.org.

State Frontiers and Indian Nations

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bar (page 7) for extracts from the declaration) to guarantee the integrity and respect for Indigenous peoples.

With all of these declarations, Indigenous leaders reiterate the importance that Indigenous participation should have in peace talks. They rightly point out that a meaningful and lasting peace will not be reached as long as the Indigenous peoples who live in the disputed territories continue to be ignored. Still, the governments of Ecuador and Peru are not listening. The government of Peru, for example, has proposed a plan to strengthen

its borders by giving away Indigenous land to colonizers from different areas of the country.

But peace will not come through the further colonization of Indigenous people. On the contrary, peace will only be achieved when Indigenous land is rightly and justly protected, and the Indigenous way of life secured. A joint declaration from AIDESEP and CONFENIAE states:

"Nowadays, it is in vogue to speak of integration. However, we have lived for thousands of years in peaceful communion with our Indigenous neighbors on both sides of the border. Furthermore, borders that the white people created have divided communities like the Shuar, Quichua and Cofán. But we continue to feel as though we were part of one Indian continental nation: the ancient Abya Yala." ☺

Additional declarations and information from Indigenous organizations on this border conflict are in SAIIC's PeaceNet conference saic.indio as well as on the Internet at: http://ukanaix.cc.ukans.edu/~marc/geography/latinam/ecuador/border_main.html.

Chile, Upper Biobío

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However, because of a lack of resources and interest, this law is not always enforced and large companies such as ENDESA can circumvent the law by, for example, buying land and building houses in other areas, trying to persuade native communities to "sell."

The purpose of the Environmental Bases Law (No. 19,300) is "to regulate all activities that in one way or another affect the environment." However, because the law still lacks specific and definitive legislative language, it is easy for large corporations to act in defiance of the spirit such laws.

As of now, it is apparent that the CNE will recommend the construction of the Ralco power plant without objectively re-evaluating its inevitable effects. In December 1994, the CNE recommended the construction of the plant's gas pipelines. Ralco already has utilization rights on the Biobío River's non-drinkable water, the provisional electrical concession, and engineering studies in their final stages of completion.

Even though the CNE did not include the Ralco power plant in its latest plan of works, the government is about to consent to its construction. If the government does give ENDESA the permission to build Ralco, it will close the possibility for a real environmental evaluation to be conducted. Ralco, like Pangué, will become an example of how the Chilean government allows big corporations to undertake socially and environmentally risky ventures despite the existence of laws that prohibit such projects. A similar multi-dam project during the 1970s, Antuco County on the Laja River, did not make good on its promise. Antuco is today one of poorest counties of Chile.

Public outcry has been massive. Different environmental organizations like GABB (Action Group in Defense of the Biobío), Indigenous rights groups, student activists and other outraged citizens have joined forces to stop the construction of Ralco. In a public declaration, GABB called for a complete halt to any other project along the Biobío River, the enforcement of the Environmental and Indigenous Laws, respect for the Pehuenche communities, their land and culture, and the creation of an effective energy policy that would prioritize the social and ecological sustainability of the country. ☺

News from SAIIC...



This has been a very busy Spring as SAIIC has enjoyed visits from many Indigenous people from South and Meso America. Many of these visitors were here for the Abya Yala Fund board meeting the beginning of May (see story page 37).

Aucan Huilcaman, a Mapuche leader from southern Chile, toured the United States in May to denounce efforts to extend NAFTA to Chile and the negative impact it has on Indigenous peoples there. He gave several presentations and a press conference while he was in the Bay Area.

José María Cabascango, Quichua from Ecuador and coordinator of Territory and Policy at CONAIE, spent several days with us in June on his way back to Ecuador from the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) meeting in Alaska. We conducted an interview with José María about his experiences with the Indigenous movement in Ecuador which we will print in the next issue of *Abya Yala News*.

Nilo Cayuqueo, who has been coordinator, director, and co-founder of SAIIC for 12 years, will turn the directorship of SAIIC to Amalia Dixon, a Miskitu from

Nicaragua. Nilo will spend more of his time working with Abya Yala Fund, but also will remain as active board member of SAIIC while helping Amalia in the transition. Also, Nilo has been awarded a Vanguard Foundation Sabbatical Fellowship. The sabbatical will allow Nilo to take two months of vacation. He is planning to go to the south to visit Indian communities. Congratulations.

Amalia Dixon, who has long-term experience with Indigenous organizations and the autonomy process on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, has been chosen as the new director of SAIIC. We are arranging her visa so she can work in the Oakland office. She recently attended the IITC meeting in Alaska where she made many friendships and learned much about the situation of Indigenous peoples in North America. (She will continue in SAIIC the work Nilo has been doing for many years.) Welcome, Amalia.

SAIIC board member **Carlos Maibeth** has been actively involved in a project to help electricity to the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua through the use of solar panels. A recent fundraising in Berkeley, California, raised funds for this project.

Joe Bryan is working in the SAIIC office for a month this summer as an Intern. Joe is a Community Studies and Latin American and Latino Studies major at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Part of this major entails a six-month internship with a social change organization. After his time with us, Joe plans to continue his Internship in the Ecuadorian Amazon at the AMAZANGA institute.

SAIIC is also pleased to announce that **Gilles Combrisson** has joined us as our new Journal Coordinator. Gilles has just finished his degree in Latin American and Iberian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He worked for six months last year with the Shuar Federation in the Ecuadorian Amazon.

SAIIC continues to seek to broaden the base of subscribers to *Abya Yala News*. Please help us by asking your friends to subscribe. In addition, we urge you to clip the Library Recommendation Form below and submit it to your local public or university library. This is a highly effective manner of spreading Indigenous perspectives more widely.

Library Recommendation Form

Please forward this form to your librarian requesting that they enter a subscription to *Abya Yala News*.

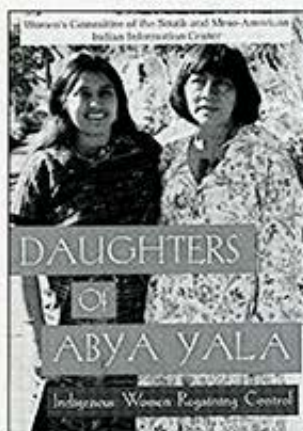
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ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM SAIIC



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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