

## PACIFIC REGION

At present, the struggle of Indigenous Peoples adopts different forms of organization to resist imperialism and colonialism.

The Pacific Region is an area which, although information is hard to come by, has suffered much repression and massacres by the colonial governments. This region consists of Australia, New Zealand, East Timor, West Pacific, New Caledonia, French occupied Polynesia, Hawaii and Micronesia.

Although there have been numerous meetings at local levels, probably the most important is the South Pacific Conference held from June 25-27 in Canberra, Australia. The following is part of the report of the Pacific Region at the General Assembly of the WCIP in Panama:

"The Pacific Region, contrary to the popular myth of idyllic coral islands populated by carefree villagers, suffers the full range of colonial oppression, and the struggles of indigenous peoples are characterized to a large extent by the kind of occupation they endure."

French Occupation--The Maori people in Polynesia have been subject to French control for over a century. During the past years, the situation has worsened due to the French program of nuclear testing in the Pacific which began in 1962 and the dumping of waste by the U.S. and Japan. This threatens the life of humans, animals, and ecology as a whole.

New Caledonia was annexed by the French 130 years ago, with the intention of turning it into a penal colony. For the native Kanak people the French presence caused an immediate and lasting social upheaval. Like the Australian aboriginals, they were forced to live on reserves in poor lands to which they had no title. But the social turmoil of New Caledonia today stems from the fact that from 1903 to 1945 forced labor was instituted. Today the Kanak struggle for independence led by the Kanak Independence Front is gaining momentum. While the French government offers "autonomy" by 1989, the Independence Front has lodged its own program. This would lead to an act of self-determination during this year, and independence on Sept. 24, 1985, the 132nd anniversary of French annexation.

English Occupation--Australia and New Zealand: The victims of Anglo and American occupation are also entering the political arena to an increasing extent. Despite many obstructions, the National Aboriginal Conference is carrying out the task of representing Aboriginal opinion to the government of Australia. The struggle for self-determination is led by the NAC working within and outside the system to bring about change. The Maua Motuhake in New Zealand is a Maori political party which aims to gain control over land, law, and education. The Organization of the Maori People, like that of the Aborigines, is proceeding on many levels.

Indonesian Occupation--East Timor and West Papua: The worst cases are the victims of Indonesian expansionism. The people of East Timor and West Papua have endured a

concerted campaign of genocide since the beginning of Indonesian occupation. In these countries the killing and terrorism of indigenous people is part of a sustained program of control, geared to replace the existing population with the invading culture in as short a time as possible. In simple terms this is a horror of unimaginable proportions, but it is the daily experience of many East Timorese and West Papuans. Since emerging from 464 years of Portuguese colonization, the people of East Timor have been subjected to an invasion in which 150,000 people have died. A continuous guerrilla war has had catastrophic effects on the population. Timorese are continually uprooted from their homes or resettlement camps, and forced into new camps in unfamiliar areas so they can offer no support to Fretilin (Timor Liberation Front), the rebel organization. Traditional ways of life have been disrupted, hunger and malnutrition are rife and many refugees have been waiting in vain for years to join their families who have fled. The United Nations General Assembly has consistently rejected the legitimacy of the Indonesian annexation of East Timor.

As in East Timor, the Indonesian annexation of West Papua continues to cause killings, torture and massacres of whole cities opposing invasion. Another problem is that thousands of Javanese immigrants are relocated on land belonging to indigenous Melanesians. The Free Papua Movement represents the people of West Papua in resistance to the Indonesian occupation.

United States Occupation--The United States continues to control Micronesia for strategic reasons. Micronesia is now divided into four states: the Republic of Belau, the Federated States (Yap, Truck, Ponape, and Kossae), the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Northern Marianas. A large part of this territory is used for U.S. nuclear bases, occupying lands of indigenous people and destroying the ecology with tests of chemical and biological arms.

The illegal U.S. occupation of Hawaii has brought many negative consequences for native Hawaiian people, dispossessing them of their lands, militarizing the islands, and lowering the social, economic, educational, health, mortality, and language standards of the people.

The report of the South Pacific Confernece ends saying, "These, then are the countries which now form the Pacific Region of the WCIP. Our histories are different but similar, and our member organizations range from rebel guerrilla groups, to political parties, to autonomous representative organizations. The spiritual relationship with the land, the commonality of experience, particularly the traumatic experience of alienation and loss heralded by colonization, and our continued presence as the most disadvantaged groups in our societies has given the indigenous peoples a natural unity of spirit which we may yet fuse into a unity of action."

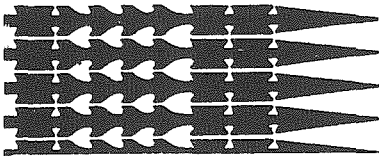
STATEMENTS from the COMMISSION ON LIBERATION AND THE LAND at the WCIP Conference

"One of the many forms of repression is the practice of extinguishing the existence of the indigenous people by separating them from their traditional lands. Land to the indigenous people represents more than a commodity to be bartered back and forth to maximize profit. For many indigenous people, land is the seat of spirituality. It is the guardian and protector of the bones of our forefathers; it is the historical record of a people, the provider of food, clothing, and shelter; it represents the hope of the generations to follow.

"To separate the indigenous people from the land traditionally held by us is to pronounce certain death for we will either die physically, or our minds and bodies will be altered in such a way that we will mimic the foreigners' ways, adopt their language, accept their thoughts, and build a foreign prison around our indigenous spirit which suffocates rather than allows for the flourishing of our spirit.

"Whether or not we die physically or alter our minds and become the foreigner, we still perish when we are separated from our traditional lands.

"We call for a united effort in gathering the ancient wisdom and knowledge of all our indigenous people along with the practitioners of this knowledge, to exchange that which can be exchanged, and respect that which should remain secret; to teach our youth the treasures of our culture and inspire pride and dignity in our future leaders; to unify in solidarity the indigenous people across the world to bring about our liberation."



WORKING COMMISSION REPORTS

"The national governments do not respect our ancestral territorial rights, which embrace not only the land itself, but the spiritual world of the Indian as well. Mother Earth is not for sale or rent." Quote from: Commission #1, Territorial Rights, in Working Commission Reports: Second Conference of Indian Nations and Organizations of South America. Tiwanaku, Bolivia. Published by SAIIC, 1984. To order a copy, send a check for \$3.00 made out to the American Friends Service Committee to: SAIIC, P.O. Box 7550, Berkeley, CA 94707.