

# Oil Companies Threaten Indian Communities

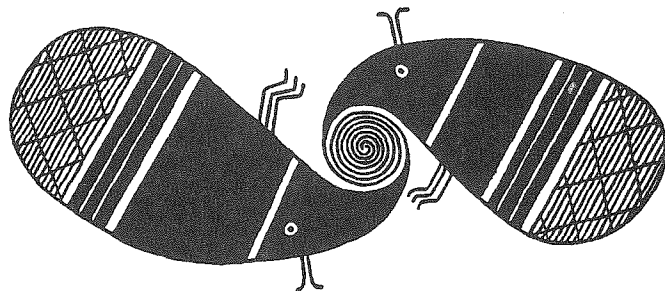
(Sarayacu, Ecuador) The Texas-based oil company, ARCO (the Atlantic-Richfield Co.) is finishing an exploratory well on Amazonian Quechua Indian lands and in three months the year-long exploratory phase will be over and commercial drilling will begin. Meanwhile, the ARCO drill-sites are being guarded by heavily armed Ecuadorian Military units. This is taking place despite the fact that the Ecuadorian government signed an agreement with OPIP (*the Organization of Indian People of Pastaza*) last year which stated that all Indian lands in the Sarayacu Region would be demarcated and legalized, and all work being done by oil companies would cease until this happens. The agreement also states that adequate environmental measures would be enforced in the exploitation of resources and that the *Summer Institute of Linguistics* (a Texas-based missionary organization) would be prohibited from operating in Ecuador. As of today, none of these agreements have been kept by the government.

The drilling is being done on Moretecocha Indian lands, near Sarayacu, in the Province of Pastaza, in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Pastaza is the most intact Amazon rainforest left in Ecuador. There has been very little colonization except near the capitol of Puyo. This is sure to change if commercial oil drilling begins. Several other oil companies are finishing explorations and gearing up to drill in Pastaza, including British Gas and UNOCAL.

What is taking place in Pastaza is an all-too-familiar scenario which has taken place in rainforest regions throughout South America. First, valuable natural resources are discovered on Indian lands by North American or European companies. Next, the *Summer Institute of Linguistics* moves in to local Indian communities in order to undermine the Native culture and prevent the influence of Indian federations. Then, roads are built, massive exploitation of resources and rapid colonization begins. National militaries are employed to insure that the process unfolds smoothly and objections are quickly silenced. This is how the Amazon rainforest environment and Indian communities are effectively destroyed.

Please don't let this happen again! Currently, the only people actively working to prevent this from happening in Pastaza is OPIP, CONFENIAE (*The Confederation of Indian Organizations of the Ecuadorian Amazon*), and CONAIE (*The Confederation of Indian Organizations of Ecuador*). The Ecuadorian Military has been actively discrediting and harassing all of these organizations, calling them "extreme leftist, violent terrorists." The

situation is very critical and major violence may be taken against the members of these organizations very soon. The truth is, these organizations are very strong Indian organizations which are attempting to protect their people and homelands from destruction. They are calling on the international community to support them in their struggle.



## How You Can Help!

**Please write, call, send Faxes and telexes to ARCO, and President Rodrigo Borja of Ecuador, protesting this critical situation and expressing your solidarity with the Indian people of Ecuador. Please reprint this bulletin in your publications and pass it on to others. Your help is desperately needed!**

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