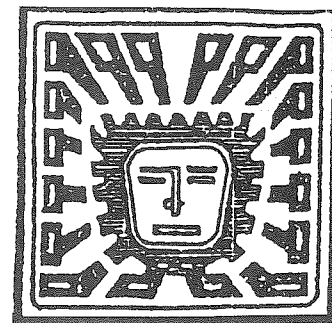


Amazon

700 Amazonian Indians March for Land and Dignity!



"We Indian people have walked so that everyone in Bolivia and throughout the world will know that we exist and that we have our rights. We want our ancestral lands which have been stolen by ranchers and logging companies, returned to us. We are perfectly capable of managing these lands on our own!" - Marcial Fabricano

(Bolivia) On August 15th 1990, 300 Indian people left the Beni Region of the Bolivian Amazon on a march to the Bolivian capitol of La Paz, high in the Andes. The march grew in strength as they passed through Indian village after Indian village on the long, uphill trek. The marchers mobilized almost one-quarter million lowland Indian people along the way. In La Paz, they publicized the many abuses against their peoples being perpetrated by timber companies and ranchers. Among others, the following communities participated in the march: Chimanés, Yuracares, Maticos, Movimas, Sirionos, Waranis, Mosetenes, Cobendo, Chipayas, Sancalixto, San Lorenzo de Mojos, Chiriwanos.

The marchers primary demands are the inmemorial right Indian people have to the lands where they have lived for thousands of years, and that timber companies and ranchers respect these rights. They demanded the return and the restoration of the once pristine forests which the Bolivian government leased to seven lumber companies.

In 1978, 1.47 million hectares of the Chimanés Rainforest (located at the entrance to the Bolivian Amazon) was declared a "Forest Reserve." In 1982, 135,000 hectares of the same land was declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO. Then in 1986, the Bolivian government arbitrarily changed the legal status of the Chimanés Forest to "Forest of Permanent Production." The government then began to sell logging concessions within the preserve to lumber companies. Over 11,700 cubic meters of fine hardwood have been cut and no reforestation measures have been taken.

The 700 delegates marched for 33 days, experiencing radical temperature changes as they made the Andean climb. In the Highlands, they were greeted by powerful Aymara and Quechua organizations which welcomed their lowland brothers with ancient rituals, where offerings were made to the sacred Achachila Mountains of La Cumbre. Part of the huge success of this historical march is due to the very personal expression of grievances, Indian nation to Indian nation.

The idea for the March for Land and Dignity grew out of the Second Encounter for Unity among the Indigenous People of the Beni Region and was led by CPIB (Indigenous Peoples' Central Office of Beni Province).

Please write and express your solidarity with the Central de Pueblos Indígenas del Beni
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