

nities are depressed. Alaska Natives resisting this process are encouraging members of the tribes to transfer title to the Tribal Councils from the Native Corporations, thereby protecting communal ownership. Free trade and privatization will benefit the business community, as is aptly noted in a headline in a

Bureau of National Affairs publication called BNA International Trade Daily which states "Agricultural Reforms announced in Mexico should benefit U.S. Firms, specialists say."

The Tarahumara, Tepehuano, and Raramuri of Chihuahua want the government to recognize the ethnic and cultural diversity

of Mexico and allow the Indigenous people to play a role in the national arena. They state: "For the Indians of the state to retain their identity and contribute to the identity and richness of the state, it is necessary to respect the territory that they have been defending for four centuries."

## Mexico

# 300 TSELTALES AND CHO'OL INDIANS VIOLENTLY EVICTED

At midnight on Saturday, Dec. 28, 1991, 200 state judicial police bearing sticks and firearms violently evicted 300 Tseltales and Cho'ol Indians from the steps of the Municipal Palace in Palenque, Chiapas. They had occupied the square two days before to protest police violence, unjustified arrests, and judicial abuse and corruption, and to demand access to interpreters in the court system.

As a result, 102 people were arrested, including Jesuit priest Jerónimo Hernández, and Cho'ol deacon Sebastian Torres.

While being held incommunicado, they were beaten, dispossessed of their belongings, and pressured to sign declarations which they were not allowed to read. The Public Ministry of Palenque denied a request on the part of local government officials that prisoners be medically examined in order to certify physical injuries suffered.

On Monday, Dec. 30, Hernandez and 92 Indians were released. The remaining nine were held without bail on charges which included disturbing the peace, inciting to riot, and sedition.

On Saturday, Jan. 5, while government officials held formal talks with the organizations involved, sentences ranging from 10 to 40 years were handed down for the nine. Non-



governmental human rights organizations took the case to the government's National Commission for Human Rights.

The wives of the incarcerated have received support from throughout the state of Chiapas, as well as from other parts of the country. Local merchants have financed paid aids requesting that the authorities respond to the Indians' petitions. Telegrams demanding freedom for the imprisoned have poured into the governor and Chief Justice's offices. Meanwhile, government-controlled farmer and workers' organizations have responded with a counter-campaign.

On Wednesday, in Tuxtla Gutierrez, one of the judges in charge declared himself incompetent to continue with the case. The three organizations who sponsored the December sit-in, the Committee for the Defense of In-

dian Freedom (CDLI), the Union of Indian Communities of the Chiapaneca Jungle (UCISECH), and Tsoblej Yu'un Jwocoltic Union, have since returned to the Plaza at Palenque, where they are holding a vigil to pressure for the resolution of their original demands and for the immediate release of the nine prisoners.

The above-mentioned organizations ask that people send telegrams demanding freedom for the imprisoned to:

- The Mexican President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari (Palacio Nacional del Gobierno; Mexico D.F.)
- The Chiapas State Governor, Patrocinio Gonzalez Garrido (Palacio de Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas)
- The government's National Commission for Human Rights president, Jorge Carpizo. (Periferico Sur #3469; Col. San Jeronimo Lidice; C.P. 10200 Mexico D.F.)

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