



SOFIA PAINIQUEO

SAIIC recently sponsored a visit to the Bay Area by Sofia Painiqueo which gave her the opportunity to meet many people and to give a number of presentations. As a traditional Mapuche singer, and as one of the founders of the Mapuche Cultural Centers and AD-MAPU, she had much to say regarding her people's history and current concerns, including the following comments made on SAIIC's monthly radio program.

"We, the Mapuche people, are a nation, a nation within the Chilean nation. Speaking historically about our Mapuche nation, before the Spanish arrived we had a nomadic way of life. Our nation covered an area consisting of 32 million hectares. It extended from what is now the city of Copiapo to the Gulf of Reloncavi. This means that the Mapuches were able to move freely from north to south and east to west, from ocean to ocean.

"When the conquerors came, we had to fight a war, to fight 300 years of war, a cruel and bloody war. The men had to go to fight, to defend their land, to defend the liberty of their people.

"After those 300 years of war, after the Republic of Chile was established in 1810, the Mapuches have had to continue to struggle stronger and more permanently. They have had to struggle against the laws imposed on them, against the pacts and agreements that were made to maintain these laws.

"In any case, with or without laws, Mapuche land was seized. Their lands became smaller until reducciones (reserves) were formed in different parts of the Chilean



Sofia Painiqueo in Berkeley with Lisa Yankton.
Photo: S. Lobo

territory. The Mapuche people were reduced to small groups which diminished their strength.

"Under all the governments, though, we as Mapuches have been organized. But, sadly, no government has listened to us. We have fought continually and permanently for our rights to land and to be allowed to participate under the Chilean constitution.

"During our 400 years of struggle, there has only been one exception in which we did participate in a government. This was under the Allende government. This was a popular government, a democratic government. This is how the Mapuche people managed to make their own law. This is law 17,729, which deals with the defense of Indian land, or rather dealt, as it no longer exists.

"I also want to make something clear to avoid misunderstandings when I say that Allende 'gave' land to Indians in Chile. For us, the Mapuche, no government alien to an aboriginal people in the American continent has the right to give the land to Indians. The lands have always been ours; they always will be ours. We want nations in general to recognize that they live on Indian land, and they must respect Indians.

"After the Allende government came the coup. This is how our country fell under the rule of the military general, the current president, General Pinochet. This is also how law 2,568 was written and imposed on the Mapuche people. This law deals with the division of Indian lands. According to the government, this is the best law written for the Mapuches during their 400 years of struggle. For us, the Mapuches, this is the worst law.

"We have seen and are seeing the division of land, and personal titles of domain are being given. This makes [individual] Mapuches owners of their own lands. This law also states that those who wish to no longer be Mapuches may do so legally by changing their last name. And that's it. They are no longer Mapuche. For us, at the moment, our communities are divided. We cease to be Mapuches, even without changing our names. Divided, our forms of work and organization would no longer be the same. It would no longer be communal. There would not be a form of organization to defend our land in a united way. Each will fight for his or her own little piece of land.

"Where before we lived on a land covering 32 million hectares, today, with the division of the communities, we would not have more than three to four hectares per Mapuche family and each Mapuche family has 8 to 12 or more members. Where are we going to work, to produce, to raise animals?

"We think that due to the current economic situation facing Chile, we will not be able to pay our taxes, so within five to ten years, we will lose our lands. And we, the Mapuches will automatically be left without land. This means extermination of the Mapuche people. We will be left without land and will have to begin working for the big landholders in order to survive as individuals, no longer as Mapuches.

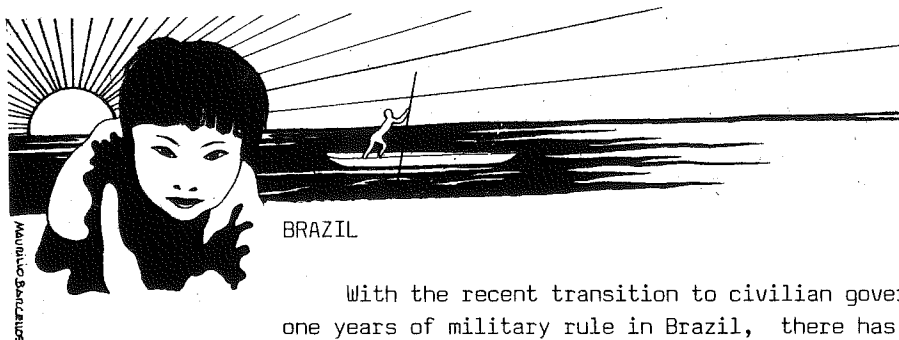
"We, the Mapuches, have existed by having land. And we will continue to exist if we have land. That is why the most important part of our



struggle has always been the domain of land. Land for us is Mother Earth, she which gives us life, the base of our existence, the base of our economy, and no people, no country, can continue to live without land. That is why we fight, for our land."



The Jornada sobre Discriminacion will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 19-22. It is sponsored by the Secretaria de Lucha Contra el Racismo of the World Council of Churches. For more information contact Yvone Quiroga, Cotagaita 1887, Ramos Mejia 1704, Buenos Aires, Argentina.



BRAZIL

With the recent transition to civilian government after twenty-one years of military rule in Brazil, there has been hope in Indian communities that administrators sympathetic to Indian concerns would be appointed to FUNAI, the government department for Indian affairs. However, according to the latest issue of Poratim (subscription \$15; send a bank order to CIMI/PORATIM, Edificio Venancio III, Sala 310, Caixa Postal 11-1159, CEP 70084, Brasilia, DF, Brasil), it now appears that an accountant who rose through the FUNAI bureaucracy during military rule will occupy the top position in the agency for the immediate future. Poratim suggests this reflects both the priorities of FUNAI, 75% of whose budget is consumed by the salaries of the agency's employees, as well as the slow pace of change that can be expected from the new government.

Another important issue on the horizon in Brazil is the apportionment of seats in the assembly which is to be elected next year to write a new constitution. Indian groups say they should be able to select Indian representatives to the assembly independently of the national political parties. They intend to promote the concept of Brazil as a