

CHILE

Mapuches Present Views to Pope

"We, the Mapuches, want to make our own present and future history. We do not want to fight or to be fought. We want understanding, and along with it peace, justice, liberty and adequate lands for development in our own style, culture, and capacity."

These words are part of a letter presented to Pope John Paul II at Pampa Ganaderos during his recent visit to Chile. The letter also says that, "Five hundred and fifty years ago, our people lived on this land which nourished us both physically and spiritually. We were defeated militarily and placed on small reservations where the land is poor. Because of this we have had to change certain aspects of our culture and our social and economic systems. Forms and styles have changed with time, but our situation as a segregated ethnic minority has been constant and becomes more intense.

"Peñi [Brother] John Paul, we are not even considered a people. The laws and the constitution of the Republic of Chile do not recognize our existence." The letter explains that although the Mapuche are a people, "legally we do not exist in this society."

"We, the Mapuches, want you to know that we are a very religious people, that we have deep faith. Our god Ngenechen Kimnei

knows this. We trust that you understand and support us, but we need you to listen to our cry and pray to your god, Jesus Christ, to intervene before those who do not want to listen to our problems."

The Mapuche want "respect for our traditions. We want to continue celebrating our religious ceremonies, our Nguillatunes, and speaking our language, Mapudugún. Through it, we transmit to our children our values, habits, and customs. To not speak our language would be like not breathing, not living."

In Pampa Ganaderos, where the Pope made a public appearance and mingled with people of the Temuco area, a large *rehue* (Mapuche altar) was built. The Mapuches who carved it and the *machi* (spiritual leader) who blessed it hope that it will later be put in a central location in Temuco to remind everyone of the Pope's encounter with Mapuche people.

In another letter to Pope John Paul II, the Mapuche organization Nehuen Mapu asks support in their struggle for restoration of Mapuche land, recognition of the land titles granted by Spain centuries ago, programs of bilingual education and technical assistance, loans for agricultural development, and political autonomy.

Mapuches Occupy A Farm In Puren

A farm of 380 hectares was occupied by two Mapuche communities comprising 160 people in Puren on April 5, 1987. The Mapuches said that the act is "part of a movement which intends to recover the land that legitimately belongs to us because it belonged to our ancestors. Our current conditions force us to find a way to survive."

The farm was occupied by members of the Loncoyán Grande and Pichihueico communities, who say they are heirs of Cacique José

Manuel Catrileo Inal, who had legal authority over the land. Members of the Mapuche organization AD-Mapu, who helped organize the takeover, said, "We offer our support and solidarity as we feel this is a just struggle to recover land legitimately theirs and necessary for their survival." AD-Mapu also noted that the presence of elders, children, and animals of the communities demonstrates how desperate their situation is and how inadequately the national economy serves their needs.