

Generally speaking, in Indian communities in Argentina today native languages are still spoken, but in the schools the official language has always been Spanish. Indian religious ceremonies are still practiced, but Christian religious sectors try to destroy Indian culture by discrediting these ceremonies, saying that they are acts of the devil. These religious groups are backed by the local authorities and landholders, because the Christianity that they follow is that of not resisting injustice. They move the Indians off the land and use them as cheap labor under working conditions no different from slavery.

While in Argentina, I had several meetings with Indian leaders from organizations such as Parcialidades Tobas (northeast), Federacion Diaguita-Calchaqui (north), Nehuen Mapu (Mapuches from the south), and Centro Kolla and Asociacion Indigena in Buenos Aires. They expressed to me a great interest in coming in contact with Indian people from North America in order to exchange experiences.

All Argentine Indian organizations will participate in a conference on "Racial Discrimination in the Americas" which will be held in Buenos Aires in June, 1985. This event has been organized by the World Council of Churches.

## CHILE

About one million of the 11 million people who live in Chile are Mapuche Indians. Many live in traditional communities in the bountiful rural area south of Santiago. They have been subject to serious violations of their human rights since the military government was installed under General Pinochet in the bloody coup in 1973. In their struggle to resist the military, the Mapuche have become the vanguard of the campesino (peasant) population. Their demands include the right to their ancestral lands, the right to maintain and develop their culture, language, and traditions, and the right to decide their own destiny.



*PUEBLO Y TIERRA MAPUCHE!!  
EJEMPLO DEL DESPOJO HISTORICO*

1984 was a year of "despojo" (plunder) and severe repression against the Mapuche people. Mapuche leaders were arrested and beaten by the local police on several occasions. In January of 1984, a young Mapuche student was found assassinated, supposedly by the Alianza Chilena Anticomunista. Later this same paramilitary organization threatened the lives of all members of AD-Mapu, an organization which represents the Mapuche people.

Last December, one of the members of AD-Mapu gave a moving presentation on the current situation of the Mapuche people to the U.N. Special Rapporteur for Chile. Part of this presentation follows:

"The Pinochet regime has implemented, since the beginning, an open and systematic policy of racial discrimination and genocide against the Mapuche people. This has been in the form of killings, arrests, exile, and disappearances of many members and leaders of the Mapuche communities from different regions of the country. This is generally unknown to organizations committed to human rights investigations.

"We want to call the attention of human rights organizations to the Mapuche situation. In order to do this, it is important to keep in mind the vision of the cosmos and the cultural values of the Mapuche, which are not generally considered in reports.

"We would like to point out that the Mapuches have a SACRED and COLLECTIVE concept of the earth and all it produces. There are no concepts like private property, commercial value, or constantly changing technology that industrial societies have. The religious and sacred dimensions have a global and general quality in Mapuche culture. To alter any aspect of Mapuche culture is to alter the sacred spirituality of Mapuche people.

"Traditionally, for the Mapuche the earth is part of life itself and it also has a sacred dimension which encompasses the existence and culture as a whole of Mapuche society.

"With this in mind, it is easy to see the vast damage caused to the spirit of the Mapuche people by the division of sacred and collective land. The consequences are unpredictable for the future of the culture of this people.

"In documents recently issued by the AD-Mapu Mapuche organization, the current situation of the Mapuche people is characterized as the most critical in history. This is based on the weakening of social and cultural unity as a direct consequence of the arbitrary and unjust division of Indian communities. INDAP (Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Agropecuario) representatives, with no consideration of the legitimate rights of the community, grant land titles to the OCCUPANTS, whether or not they have rights to the land. Many times these titles are granted to non-Mapuche individuals and landholders.



"When Decree Law 2568 was written in 1979, 2,066 Indian reservations covering 375,000 hectares existed within the 8th and

10th regions. According to INDAP, by late 1983, 1,365 reservations totaling 235,000 hectares had been divided. This means that only 70% reservations have not yet been divided. . . .

"The implementation of this law has meant that several thousand Mapuches have been robbed of their lands and have been left without territorial rights. . . .

"One of the immediate effects which can be seen by the implementation of this new law is the severe social and economic situation. There is a high percentage of unemployment, hunger, and misery in all communities, both those which have been divided and those which have not. This is leading towards a situation of racial explosion of unforeseeable consequences, caused by the neglect, discrimination, and repression suffered during these years of military rule."

#### Mapuche Film

A film called Marri-Chihueu (Ten Times, We Will Overcome), in which the Mapuche give their testimony to the world, is now being made in 16mm and video. It presents the life, culture, and current reality of the Mapuche Nation, but it has not yet been completed due to lack of funds. If you would like to collaborate in any way, please write to: The Mapuche Film Project, 135 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11238.

#### Juan Neculqueo

We would like to thank all those who were concerned about and collaborated with Juan Neculqueo, the Mapuche leader who was being sought by the military government of Chile (see our last newsletter). Juan spent some time in Panama but was denied visas to both Canada and the U.S. Through the assistance of SAIIC and other organizations, he is now exiled in Argentina under the sponsorship of the Centro Kolla. Juan is expecting his family to join him there and sends his thanks to all who, through SAIIC, have helped him.

#### BRAZIL

Contemporary scholars estimate that 500 years ago, before the European invasion of the New World, there were as many as 5 million people living in the Amazon basin in South America. The first Europeans to explore the Amazon River described sections where for mile after mile after mile the densely-clustered homes of the indigenous residents lined the river's banks. Today Brazilian Indians estimate their numbers at 200,000 people, organ-

