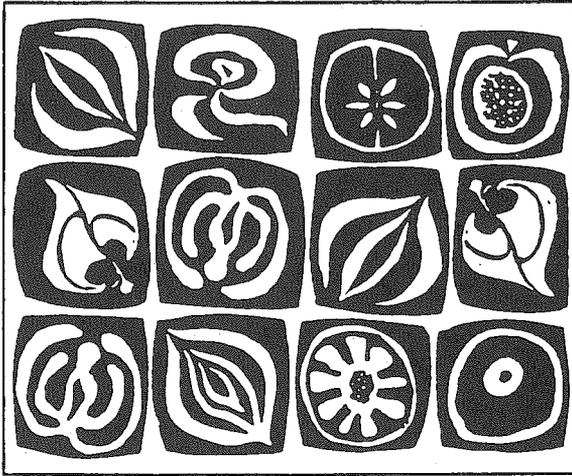


some areas to make helicopter landings. Those were the oil companies like Webster and Shell. We were concerned, and when we asked the authorities about the exploration on our land, they said that it will only be in a few areas, that we don't have to worry.



But throughout the years, more companies came and they extended the area of oil exploration. There is a French company, CGG which is exploring everywhere. They are using powerful detonators and many of the animals have run away, scared. In many cases the animals left their eggs and babies without protection and they died. For example, the other day we found some dead baby parrots in a nest abandoned by the parents.

We have a sacred lagoon where we used to go to have ceremonies. But now, with all the explosions on the edges, all of our sacred spirits have been frightened away. Also, most of the fish are dead.

There aren't so many wild animals left, the rivers are contaminated, and we often see

dead fish floating down the rivers. About two years ago, the oil companies threw about 50 boxes of a chemical we call 'Rojo' into the river. This killed all the fish for a long time.

Most of the Indian people here in the Pastaza Province are members of OPIP, the Organization of Indigenous People of Pastaza. Together with other Indian federations in the Ecuadorian Amazon, we are also members of CONFENIAE. There is no way for us to protect our lands from these companies without our organizations. In the past, non-Indian people would say that to be an Indian was to be ignorant and uncivilized, but today they are realizing that the Indian values are valid; that we need to learn from each other. We have centuries of experience living in harmony with the Amazon. We Indian people are realizing how very important it is to be in touch with other Indians from the South and maybe even from the North. I am confident that some day in the near future, Indian people will be free."



## Update on the Salasaca Case

In the Summer, 1988 issue of the SAIIC Newsletter, we reported on the situation of Rudicindo Masaquiza. Despite many letters of concern from the U.S. and Europe, he is still being held in an Ecuadorian jail without a trial.

Ten other Salasaca Indians are still in hiding to avoid capture by the Service of Criminal Investigation. One has left the country permanently. One of the names on the list is Mariano Caisabando. Last April, another Salasaca Indian also named Mariano Caisabando, but from a different community, was



*Salasacan Teenagers*

*Photo by Lynn Meisch*

kidnapped by the family of the executed thieves and brought to the police. It was verified that he is not the person on the list, but he is still being held anyway.

In June of 1988, after a plague of robberies in the community, Rudicindo Masaquiza woke up and surprised thieves who were robbing his house. Sr. Masaquiza roused his neighbors and together, they captured the thieves. In the process, one Salasaca was stabbed. After discovering that the thieves who were mestizos from a nearby town, were part of a gang responsible for robberies in many Salasaca houses, a faction of Salasacas killed them.

This led to many racial tensions and outright attacks between the Salasacas and the Mestizo communities. Rudicindo Masaquiza was arrested, stripped and beaten with a hose and remains in jail one and one-half years later.

Salasacas have lost land, lives and property through the mestizo legal system; community self-defense and enforcement of their own laws have been their only defenses. UNIS (the Union of Indigenous Salasacas) is handling the case. The President of UNIS, Jose Maria Masaquiza took the position that the Salasacas are not morally bound to obey laws and a legal system in which they had no hand in making, in which they continue to be exploited. In the subsistence economy that is pervasive among the Salasacas, to steal the sheep, tools, hand-made clothing and seed corn from a family is to rob them of years of labor, and to condemn them to years of hunger. In the plaza, when the Salasacas united to defend themselves against the racial attacks they were facing, they frequently reasserted the legality of their action by citing the laws of Tahuantinsuyo, "Do not steal. Do not be lazy. And don't lie."



## **BRAZIL**

### **Invasion of Yanomami Lands Provokes International Outcry**

Brazilian Indian leaders travelled to Roraima to observe the effects on the Yanomami people of an invasion of 40,000 gold miners. The commission was composed of Ail-