

the Andean culture. Nevertheless, the conflict with western culture has triggered the prohibition of coca, a measure reflecting the interests of the dominant classes and certainly not those of the Andean peoples.

Coca has been used in the Andes for about 4,000 years, despite continuous reprisals against those engaged in coca use and cultivation during the last 500 years. Those who support the abolition of the coca leaf, view themselves as saviors of the Andean inhabitants. The reality is that they are attempting to free themselves of a particularly western problem: cocaine addiction. This assumes that the Indian is a defenseless child, needing protection from himself. Once again, "integration" without respect for Indian culture is the goal. In fact, this is an effort to destroy the Indigenous culture under the pretext of "progress" and "civilization" in a manner similar to that of five centuries ago, when deep cultural values differing from those of the invading civilization, were ruthlessly attacked in the name of Christianity. The cross has now been replaced by the banner of progress, development and the "war on drugs." This latest assault constitutes one of the worst cultural aggressions in history and has been carried out consciously, without even the excuse of ignorance used retrospectively by the Spanish to disguise the crimes surrounding their invasion.

In 1962 the Geneva Convention resolved to eradicate coca cultivation within the next 25 years. This resolution is a violation of the right to free choice of entire peoples and cultures. Furthermore, since this resolution was passed, nothing has been added to the body of knowledge about coca which indicates that the manner in which it has been utilized by the Andean people is damaging to their health and would warrant such radical, unjust, repressive and far-reaching legislation. However, in the same way that a culture cannot be altered by the simple passage of a repressive law, the signing of a decree and the implementation of eradication plans which ignore the reality of the Andean people will not be successful in terminating coca use in the Andes.

We should ask ourselves seriously if the utopic goal of eliminating drug addiction in the United States justifies cultural aggression against the Andean people. The question should also be asked as to whether eliminating coca in the Andes is going to resolve the problem or simply motivate the international drug traffickers to switch to some other drug, equally desirable to the nation's youth in their quest to escape reality. Meanwhile, the Andean people will be left, having born the brunt of brutal physical and cultural assault on their population.

Ralph Bolton from the Anthropological Institute of the University of Trondheim stated back in 1979:

Foreign pressure on the Andean governments to declare the use and production of coca leaves illegal, has intensified lately. These pressures are the result of measures taken by the North American and

international agencies which favor this line of action in combating the drug problem in the United States and Europe. These agencies do not take into account the rights of millions of Indigenous people in the Andes for whom the coca leaf is a sacred and integral part of their daily lives. The decisions adopted by politicians and bureaucrats of diverse nationalities, attempting to ban the use of coca, are a violation of the basic rights of the Quechua and Aymara peoples who wish to maintain their cultures, practice their religions, conserve their identities, and protect their health; that is to say, exercise their right to biological and cultural survival. The coca eradication program, judged by its effects, is a form of ethnocide. (Bolton, R., 1979)

The War on Drugs

Recently, the U.S. has launched an international campaign targeting drug trafficking and focusing on the media in order to influence the public and promote the dominant culture's ideology. This campaign seeks to pressure the producer nations. Military actions have been launched in these countries under the pretext of combating the drug problem. Such was the case in Bolivia in 1986 when the U.S. occupied the nation in an operation dubbed BOL-USA. At present the U.S. has installed military bases in the Peruvian jungle using the same pretext. The true goal of these activities, however, is to establish strategic control zones in areas considered "low-intensity conflict" zones, as well as in those regions where U.S. interests face imminent danger.

In February of 1990, the governments of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the U.S met in Cartagena, Colombia, to organize a plan of action against the narcotrafficking industry. While the U.S. insists on "militarization," the coca producing nations have attempted to establish a more integrated development plan. Indian people have been noticeably absent from all of these discussions. Nevertheless, there is no evidence today of a reduction in coca producing activities. Similarly, drug trafficking has continued unabated, and the drug traffickers have not been prosecuted.

Since the U.S Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) began operating in Bolivia, the area under cultivation for coca has multiplied a minimum of three times. Likewise, drug trafficking operations now involve capital over five times superior to that of pre-DEA operations in Bolivia. Considering these results, it would appear that the actual mission of this agency is the exact opposite of that which it claims to be.

