

NEWSLETTER

South American Indian Information Center (SAIIC)

P.O. Box 7550, Berkeley, California 94707 - USA

Phone 415-521-2779

Sample Copy

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Thank you for your interest and support! We appreciate your correspondence. We also welcome those who are reading the SAIIC Newsletter for the first time. As you will see, our goal is to facilitate the exchange of information among Indians and others interested in Indian issues in South, Central, and North America by providing summaries in English of news we receive from the non-English speaking areas of the Americas. As an all-volunteer organization, we are very aware of the need for collaborative effort. For those who wish to make a tax deductible donation to SAIIC (made out to the American Friends Service Committee), your contribution will be greatly appreciated and will go to further SAIIC projects, including our newsletter, radio program, and occasional publications. We are currently raising funds to sponsor the visit of Sofia Painqueo, a traditional singer and active participant in AD-Mapu in Chile. Also, we urge those who haven't subscribed yet to the newsletter to do so.

Sincerely,

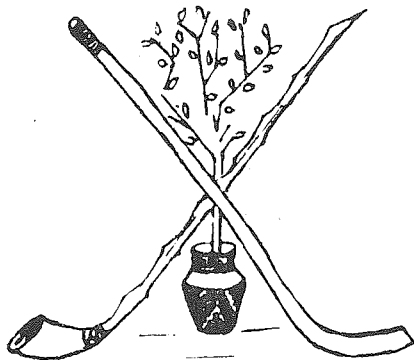
The SAIIC Committee

ARGENTINA

Nilo Cayuqueo, Coordinator of SAIIC, has just returned from a trip to South America, where he intended to visit Indian communities in Argentina and Chile. Due to an unexpected wait in Argentina to renew his passport, the latter part of the trip had to be canceled. Following is his report on Argentina.

In Argentina, which together with Chile forms the southern part of the American continent, there are 13 different Indian nations which include





approximately 700,000 of the 28 million people who live in Argentina. The largest nations are the Kolla (approximately 250,000), living in Jujuy and Salta provinces by the Bolivian border; the Tobas (approximately 80,000), living in the Chaco and Formosa provinces bordering Paraguay; and the Mapuche (approximately 150,000), living in Neuquen, Rio Negro, and Chubut provinces near Chile.

During the military dictatorship, which took power in 1976 and lasted until its forced retreat in 1983 after losing the war over the Malvinas, the basic human rights of Indian peoples worsened. A large part of their land was seized and harsh repression was imposed on the leaders who protested. At the present there are six Indians who have "disappeared." It is believed that they were killed along with thousands of other people. In 1982, nine Chanes Indian children from Salta died of starvation. Likewise, five Mapuche elders in the southern province of Neuquen died of cold and hunger last winter.

With the return of democracy, Indian people have begun to organize once more. Several regional conferences have been held and federations have begun to form. Last November, the Diaguita-Calchaqui Congress was held in the northern province of Tucuman. Many people attended, supported also by worker and peasant organizations. At the request of the Indian organizations, the Senate has approved a general law for Indian people. This is the first time in Argentine history that Indian people have been publicly recognized as living legally in communities. Indians have also taken back part of their land which had been usurped by landowners and the military. The law will be voted on by the House of Representatives in March, 1985.

Indian people have never had titles to their lands or the right to live in traditional communities. After the so-called "War for Independence," the criollos (Spanish-descended Argentines) took power and created the political boundaries of the provinces as they appear today. The different Republican governments that followed, along with the landholders and the military, forced the Indian people off their lands, much as in the United States when the European population spread west. Today in Argentina most Indians have only small parcels of land which cannot sustain them. For example, in the southern province of Neuquen, where many Mapuche live, the army now owns a large farm called Pulmari which was formed from Indian lands. Since the army's latest acquisitions in 1979, this farm now totals 50,000 hectares.

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. INDAPE (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 701 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-



ized into about 150 tribes scattered throughout the country, some 135 of whom retain their non-European language. Diseases and the demands of European-style economic enterprises have reduced the indigenous population to a mere three or four per cent of its original total.

Most of the news reaching SAIIC about Indians in Brazil during the last year centers on two topics, the continuing struggle to control their lands and their increasing success in joining the widely-scattered, linguistically-diverse Indian groups together for political action. Among the major events of 1984 were:

@ The Second Meeting of Indian Leadership, held in Brasilia in April. Organized independently of FUNAI, the government department for Indian affairs, the meeting resulted in the creation of the Indian Council of the Union of Indigenous Nations (Uniao das Nacoes Indigenas--UNI), with representatives from 44 Indian peoples.

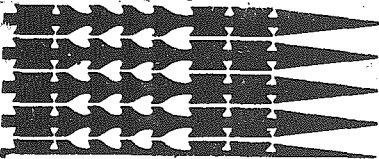
@ The appearance of Jornal Indigena, published by UNI, which contains news on the organization and Indian people from throughout Brazil. Direct correspondence to Jornal Indigena; Rua Caiubi, 126; Perdizes 05010; Sao Paulo, S.P., Brasil.

@ An assembly of Guarani and other indigenous people in Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, November 24-25, to mark the first anniversary of the assassination of Marcal de Souza and press Indian demands for control of their land. In a letter to the president of FUNAI, the assembly gave the government until April 30, 1985, to act on their demands, after which the Indians will "go ahead and set our own boundaries."

@ The replacement of the non-Indian director of the Xingu homeland by an Indian after pressure from Indian groups living in the area.

URGENT ACTION BULLETIN from Survival International, 29 Craven St., London, WC2N 5NT, England:

"Isolated Indians of the Javari valley of western Brazil have been involved in violent clashes with petroleum prospectors invading their lands. Several people have been killed in these encounters. Following the killings, the oil prospectors withdrew from the region only to recommence their seismic surveys in another Indian area." The Catholic missionary organization CIMI has been active in denouncing oil prospecting in this area and pressuring FUNAI to take a more positive role regarding indigenous rights.



PERU



The violence in Peru continues to escalate, and Indian people, along with many others, suffer; those who are on the political left, those on the right, and the vast majority who find themselves caught in a dilemma where survival for themselves and their families is their primary goal. Letters we receive from Indian friends living in small communities and cities in Peru tell us of fear of the future and great economic insecurity.

One of the effects of violence centered in the highlands has been an acceleration of migration to coastal cities, particularly the metropolitan Lima area. Like many South American cities, the population of Lima has increased phenomenally, from about 400,000 in 1930 to over 4,608,000 in 1981. Well over half of the population of Lima now consists of migrants from the highlands, and the vast majority of these people are of Indian ancestry. Thus, another indigenous reality takes place in an urban context.

Now, many people from communities in the highlands have fled the violence there to take refuge with family members living in the city, most often in the Pueblos Jovenes, neighborhoods built through the efforts of those who live there, and often called squatter settlements or shanty towns. These additional migrants are putting a strain on the already scarce resources of relatives living in the city, and friends write us that many adjustments must be made to assure that everyone has enough to eat and a place to sleep. Also affected are lands, crops and stock left behind by these migrants from an internal war, further reducing the food and agricultural resources available.

This displacement of communities and the loss of land is only one other short term result of the current violence in Peru. Indians wonder what the long term effects will be, as well as the institutionalized violence that may result.

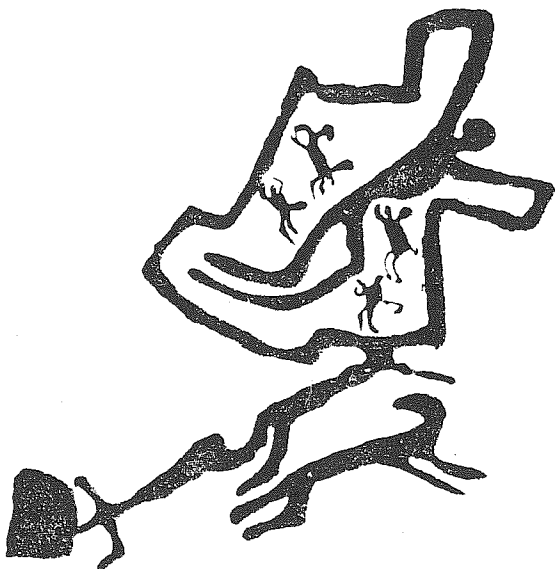
Ashaninka-Campa

Abel Chapay Miguel, president of FECONACA (Federacion de Comunidades Campas-Ashaninkas) writes that a total of 31 native communities in the area of the Rio Ene and Rio Tambo have received titled to community lands. In December of 1984 titles were given to eleven more communities and work is proceeding to finalize these land issues. FECONACA works with OCARE (Organizacion Campa del Rio Ene-Apurimac) and CART (Central Ashaninka del Rio Tambo) as member organizations of TOAK (Central Unida de las Organizaciones Campas). This federation unites Ashaninka-Campa communities found in these three river valleys.

BOLIVIA

Indian organizations in South America mourn the death of Zenobio Ayala, who was a founding member and active participant in MITKA-1. During his 43 years Zenobio was involved in the Bolivian Indian movement, both as a strategist and an activist. An editorial in the CISA newsletter comments, "We will have your example to continue the struggle for the rights of our people."

COLOMBIA



In the Cauca region of Colombia there is an ongoing struggle over land between indigenous communities and those who use the land for growing sugar cane. Clashes between indigenous communities, hacendados and government forces have resulted in many deaths. In a recent letter to President Betancur of Colombia, Trino Morales, president of ONIC (Organizacion Nacional de Indigenas de Colombia, Apartado Aereo 32395, Bogota, Colombia), stated: "Today we wish to live in peace, not at war. We are tired of this state of seige and for that reason urge you as president to respect our culture, our officials, our autonomy and to assure us of the maintenance of our indigenous lands."

NICARAGUA

The peace talks between the Nicaraguan government and the Miskito Indian organization MISURASATA have been postponed. They will be held in Bogota, Colombia, on February 22. Luis Carrion, Vice-minister of the Interior, will be representing the government of Nicaragua, and Brooklin Rivera will be representing MISURASATA.

These talks are facilitated by the governments of France, Sweden, Mexico, and Colombia, and by organizations such as the World Council of Indigenous Peoples and Cultural Survival.

U.N. COMMISSION

The 41st Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, Feb. 4 through March 15, 1985. All the official member countries of the commission will be attending to give testimony on human rights violations. The primary issues of concern are human rights violations in South Africa, Central America, and Arab territories. There will be a special emphasis on religious freedom and the situation in Chile. Various sub-commission member countries and non-governmental organizations such as the International Indian Treaty Council, the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the South American Indian Council, and the Regional Indian Council of Central America will be participating.



SOFIA PAINQUEO

Sofia Painqueo, a Mapuche from Chile, will be visiting the United States during March under the sponsorship of the Institute of Policy Studies (1901 Que Street, Northwest, Washington, DC 20009). She will be singing traditional Mapuche music and speaking throughout the United States on the history and current situation of the Mapuche in Chile. From March 19-27 she will be in northern California, hosted by SAIIC in the Bay Area and by CASA (128 Pearl Alley, Santa Cruz, CA 95060) in Santa Cruz.

Since 1979, Sofia has helped to promote the establishment of the Mapuche cultural centers which were precursors to the Mapuche organization AD-Mapu. While living in Santiago, Sofia worked with other Mapuche to form a group which coordinated their activities with AD-Mapu. She says, "I have been especially active in organizing artistic events which reaffirm the Mapuche identity. We have performed in shanty towns and churches. I performed also at the Fourth Assembly of Indigenous Peoples in Panama in September, 1984, as a representative of Mapuche women."

For information regarding Sofia's visit or her speaking schedule, contact the Institute for Policy Studies or SAIIC.

Yah teeh (Greetings) Brothers and Sisters,

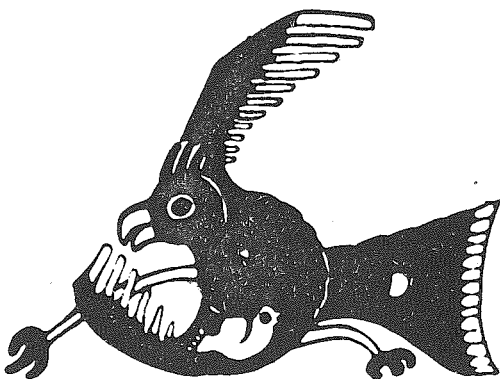
As a North American Indian and a member of the Dineh (Navajo) Nation, I welcome Sophia to the United States or to the indigenous homeland of many tribal people. Her friends look forward to her arrival and hope her visit will be a most enjoyable and successful one. May the Great Spirit be with her in her work for her people.

Peace and harmony,
James Muneta

VIDEOS

SAIIC has been visited by Alvaro Vasquez, a member of the Asamblea del Pueblo Zapoteco in Oaxaca, Mexico, who showed videos taped in various Zapotec communities by community members. He discussed the need for indigenous peoples to continue to build a strong network of direct communication, emphasizing in this instance the usefulness of video as a medium that combines visual images and sound.

Maria-Helene Laroque who lives in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada, and works with the Dene and other indigenous communities, tells us that video is used in communities there. Several SAIIC members saw a work-in-progress version of the Mapuche video Marri-Chihueu described earlier in this newsletter. We would like to hear from readers who are using video or who could lend support to indigenous video efforts.



COMPUTER NETWORKING

For information about computer networking among indigenous people, contact: Indigenous Peoples Network Research Center, P.O. Box 364, Rochester, Vermont 05767.

SAIIC RADIO PROGRAM

Tawna Sanchez (Shoshone-Bannock), International Indian Treaty Council delegate, on "South American Indian Update" (KPFA in

Berkeley, 94.1 FM, first Friday of each month, 8:00 PM), discussing her participation in the New Song Festival in Quito, Ecuador:

"This trip was a real eye opener. I was taken to a community. They talked to me about their struggles, trying to keep ahold of what land they have as a native people. Just like ours. Their struggle is our struggle. The same thing."

"South American Indian Update," broadcast throughout Northern California, is hosted by SAIIC and produced by Pat Collins for KPFA as part of the series "Living on Indian Time." LISTEN IN!

NEWSLETTER

To receive the SAIIC Newsletter for one year, and to remain on our mailing list, please send a donation of \$5.00.

WORKING COMMISSION REPORTS

To order a copy of the Working Commission Reports: Second Conference of Indian Nations and Organizations of South America. Tiwanaku, Bolivia, published by SAIIC, 1984, please send a donation of \$3.00.

TENGO CASA PROPIA

To order this book by Susan Lobo, published by the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (1984), send a check for \$11.00. All proceeds from sales are for SAIIC projects.

Please make out all checks, which are tax deductible, to: American Friends Service Committee/The South American Indian Information Center, P.O. Box 7550, Berkeley, CA, 94707, U.S.A.

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Nilo Cayuqueo, SAIIC Coordinator

Susan Lobo, Publications Editor