

CONFENIAE Center Is Burned In Puyo

The newly-constructed administrative and training center of the Confederation of Indian Nations in the Ecuadorian Amazon (CONFENIAE) in the province of Puyo was burned to the ground on the night of November 20, 1986. The local CONFENIAE president blamed the fire on arson. The building had been built by *mingas*, traditional community work brigades, over the preceding five years by members of the Shuar, Quichua, Huaorani, and Achuara nations. The inauguration of the center had been planned for December 15, 1986. No injuries were reported in the fire.

Cristóbal Naikiai, secretary of CONFENIAE, said that enemies of Indian people burned the center and that police detained some suspects but released them immediately. CONFENIAE has a long history of opposing government projects which encourage multinational corporations to occupy and exploit vast areas of traditional Indian land in the Amazon areas of Ecuador.

A spokesman for the Ecuadorian government stated that, "The fire was intentional and started by the Indians themselves to discredit the government."

PERU

Two Faces Of Peasant Patrols

A new system of justice is emerging in the mountains of northern Peru that is taking the place of police and judicial officials. *Rondas campesinas*, or peasant patrols, are serving a rapidly growing number of villages as both self-appointed police forces and court systems. Village men who volunteer to patrol one night a week or month apprehend wrongdoers and file charges with an elected steering committee which holds trials involving the entire community. Since their grassroots beginnings in the department of Cajamarca in 1976, *rondas campesinas* have been organized in almost every northern district, revealing the profound dissatisfaction Peruvian Indian peasants feel toward the existing justice system.

In southern Peru, where the war between government forces and Sendero Luminoso guerrillas continues, the army has introduced its own version of *rondas campesinas* in key villages. But like Guatemala's "civil defense patrols," these government-supported patrols act only against those the army identifies as criminals or subversives.

According to a report from the human rights group Americas Watch, entire communities have been moved by the military and forced to form civil defense patrols to defend territory against the guerrillas. Americas Watch has urged the government of Alan García to stop using the patrols as a counter-insurgency strategy.

—Robin Kirk, in *Latinamerica Press*, Nov. 1986.



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