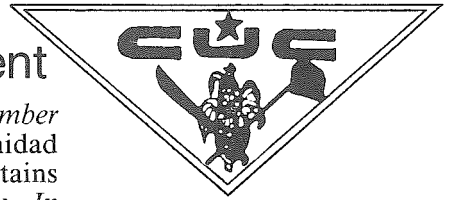


## GUATEMALA

# Few Gains Under New Government



*Rigoberta Menchu, Quiché from Guatemala, is a member of the Peasant Unity Committee (CUC, Comité de Unidad Campesina). She narrated the film When the Mountains Tremble and has written the book I, Rigoberta Menchu. In December, 1986, she made the following comments on SAIIC's radio program, South and Central American Indian Update, which is heard in northern California on KPFA, 94.1 FM, at 8:00 p.m. the third and fourth Fridays of each month.*

After 33 years of military rule in Guatemala, we now have an elected civilian president. We had hoped before the election to bring about concrete changes for the Indian people, who in Guatemala are over 75 per cent of the population. Now, after the civilian government has been in power for nine months, the situation continues to be very complicated. The killings and the disappearances have not stopped. The numbers may not be as high, but the fact remains that there are continuing abuses of human lives. This is the principal concern.

Now Guatemala is living through more profound misery than we ever experienced in the past because of the destruction of the land and the massacres. There are now thousands of people displaced from their land who are dependent on their land for their survival. Our cultural roots as well as our material survival are based on the cultivation of corn and beans.

Up to this point, none of our demands, even the most fundamental, have received any response from the Guatemalan government. There has been no clarification of the fate of the more than 36,000 who have disappeared, nor has the government identified or punished those responsible for the disappearances. And there is tremendous frustration among the Indian

Yes, I find myself alone  
everyday life confronts me with  
the reality of mourning in my soul  
the fibers of my being broken and torn from the injustice  
the struggle that springs from the blood of innocent people  
the collective martyrdom of our journey  
the shadows that amass on our journey  
the ringing of the bells of our being.



Yes,  
I am alone  
but I feel the strength  
of all the widowed women of the world  
protesting  
for men  
for women  
for children  
the violation of the right  
to live.

—Calixta Canec, Cakchiquel Maya, refugee in California