



International "500 Years

On July 17-21, 1990, nearly 400 Indian people, representing 120 nations, tribes and organizations of the Americas, met for the first time in Quito, Ecuador to discuss their peoples' struggles for self-determination and to strategize for a unified Indian response to the 1992 Jubilee celebrations. The following is their joint *déclaration*:

Indigenous Alliance of the Americas on 500 Years of Resistance Declaration of Quito, Ecuador July 1990

The Continental Gathering "500 Years of Indian Resistance," with representatives from 120 Indian Nations, International and Fraternal organizations, meeting in Quito, July 17-20, 1990, declare before the world the following:

The Indians of America have never abandoned our constant struggle against the conditions of oppression, discrimination and exploitation which were imposed upon us as a result of the European invasion of our ancestral territories.

Our struggle is not a mere reflection of the memory of 500 years of oppression which the invaders, in complicity with the "democratic" governments of our countries, want to turn into events of jubilation and celebration. Our Indian People, Nations and Nationalities are basing our struggle on our liberation. We are responding aggressively and reject this "celebration."

Our struggle is not a mere reflection of the memory of 500 years of oppression which the invaders, in complicity with the "democratic" governments of our countries, want to turn into events of jubilation and celebration. Our Indian People, Nations and Nationalities are basing our struggle on our liberation. We are responding aggressively and reject this "celebration."

The struggle of our People in recent times. This struggle is nationalized. We are now completely aware that our liberation can only be expressed through the complete exercise of our self-determination on this fundamental right. Our self-determination is not just a simple declaration. We must guarantee conditions that permit our self-determination; be expressed as complete autonomy for our Peoples. Without Indian autonomy without control of our territories.

The achievement of this task for Indian Peoples. How- ever, through our struggles we have learned that our problems are not different from those of other popular sectors. We are convinced that we must march alongside the peasants, the workers, the marginalized sectors, together with intellectuals to destroy the dominant system of oppression and to construct a new society, pluralistic, democratic and humane, in which peace is guaranteed.

The existing nation states of the Americas, their constitutions and fundamental laws are judicial/political expressions that negate our socio-economic, cultural and political rights.

From this point in our general strategy of struggle, we consider it to be a priority that we demand complete structural change: change which recognizes the inherent right to self-determination through Indian People's own governments and through the control of our territories.

Our problems will not be resolved through the self-serving politics of governmental entities which seek integration and ethno-development. It is necessary to have an integral transformation at the level of the state and national society: that is to say, the creation of a new nation.

In this Gathering, it has been clear that territorial rights are a fundamental demand of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas.



f Resistance" Organizing



Based on these aforementioned reflections, the organizations united in the First Continental Gathering of Indigenous Peoples reaffirm:

1. Our emphatic rejection of the Quincentennial celebration, and the firm promise that we will turn that date into an occasion to strengthen our process of continental unity and struggle towards our liberation.

2. Our resolute political project of self-determination and the attainment of our autonomy, in the framework of nation states, under a new popular order, respecting the appellation which each People determines for their struggle and project.

3. Our decision to defend our culture, education, and religion as fundamental to our identity as Peoples, reclaiming and maintaining our own forms of spiritual life and communal coexistence, in an intimate relationship with our Mother Earth.

4. Our rejection of the manipulation of organizations which are linked to the dominant sectors of society and have no Indigenous representation, which usurp our name for (their own) imperialist interests. At the same time, we affirm our choice to strengthen our own organizations, without excluding or isolating ourselves from other popular struggles.

5. Our recognition of the important role that Indigenous

women play in the struggles of our Peoples. We understand the necessity to expand women's participation in our organizations and we reaffirm that it is one struggle, men and women together, in our liberation process, and a key question in our political practices.

6. That we Indian Peoples consider it vital to defend and conserve our natural resources, which right now are being attacked by transnational corporations. We are convinced that this defense will be realized if it is Indian People who administer and control the territories where we live, according to our own principles of organization and communal life.

7. That we oppose national judicial structures which are the result of the process of colonization and neo-colonization. We seek a New Social Order that embraces our traditional exercise of Common Law, an expression of our culture and forms of organization. We demand that we be recognized as Peoples under International Law, and that this recognition be incorporated into the respective Nation States.

8. That we denounce the victimization of Indian People through violence and persecution, which constitutes a flagrant violation of human rights. We demand respect for our right to life, to land, to free organization and expression of our culture. At the same time, we demand the release of our leaders who are held as political prisoners, an end to repression, and restitution for the harms caused us.



Delegates to Quito Conference Address the press, speaking into the mike is a CUC representative.