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COVER PHOTO

BOLIVIA'S Indian peasants struggling for the right to earn a living off the land traditionally occupied by their tribal ancestors were massacred at Tolata in January 1974. Before the bodies could be counted, President Banzer's helicopters flew in and removed the evidence of the atrocity... but not before this one photograph was taken by an amateur. It has been reproduced on a poster by the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs; proceeds will be used to support the Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari (MITKA), the largest Indian liberation and social rights movement. MITKA aim to restore the social and political rights of the Indian peoples of Bolivia. In this issue, Land & Liberty spotlights the source of the problem facing the colonised people's of the world. And suggests the ideal solution for protecting everyone's right to earn a living – freely – without being dominated by monopolists controlling the resources of nature and therefore exploiting the dependent people...

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Freedom and land rights fight in the Fourth World...

By P. E. POOLE

THE SHUAR Indians are the best organised indigenous people in Ecuador. For years they have been fighting the authorities and white settlers over land rights and development of rich oil fields in the south-east.

Government agencies use terror to try and suppress their demand for a fair deal, says Karsten Soltau, Secretary General of the Copenhagen-based International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

The allegation is illustrated by the case of Ernesto Tseremp Juanka, the former president of the Shuar Federation, and his wife Silvia.

Last September a white cattle dealer was murdered. Police arrested all adult Shuar men in the Yawints Centre and then decided that Silvia's two brothers, aged 15 and 16, were responsible. The two boys were reportedly tortured and forced to sign a declaration in Spanish, a language they do not understand.

Among those arrested was Ernesto Juanka. He escaped, so his wife and child were arrested as hostages and jailed at Macas.

This use of hostages to silence a political opponent was raised before the UN Human Rights Committee by its Danish member, Ole Espersen, MP. Scandinavian governments asked Ecuador for an explanation. Not surprisingly, the Ecuadorian authorities proved evasive about the fate of the woman and her child held as hostages in the jungle lowlands.

THE FOURTH World is the name given to indigenous people who are descended from a country's aboriginal population. Their problems stem from the fact that they are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territory and its riches.

The oppression of these groups –



Ernesto Juanka – “on the run” – and his wife Silvia – a hostage.

from North American Indians to the Australian “abos” – takes many forms. These range from a general lack of understanding and respect for a non-European culture and lifestyle right the way through to outright physical extermination.

The quest for raw materials by industrial nations has resulted in a violent increase in the pressure exerted against the Fourth World. Whether the indigenous groups are driven out of their territories or are forced to work for the whites, such developments mean that their culture and lifestyles are annihilated. They end up on the margins of society as underpaid farm labourers, or in the slums of the big cities, deprived of human dignity.

The latest reported case is that of the largest remaining isolated tribe of Amazonian Indians in Brazil.¹ Anthropologists and missionaries are opposing a plan to create 21 reserves for the Yanomami, who would be scattered on pockets of land in about 15m. acres of the

tribe's traditional area.

Experience tells us that they would not be allowed to remain in peace even on these reserves. For the surrounding areas are to be colonised and mined for minerals, the forests cut down for wood. This will have a disastrous two-fold effect:

- The Yanomami survive by using a mixed economy of farming and hunting. Being forced to remain permanently on restricted tracts of land would cause cultural chaos.

- Their economic “strategy” is the best suited to the fragile eco-system of the basin. Scientists have now documented the threat to the environment being engineered by modern agricultural methods on the tropical forests, which quickly exhaust the fragile soil.

RARELY can the aboriginal peoples recover in time to defend themselves. For instance, there were about six to nine million Indians in Brazil when the first

Europeans arrived in 1500; now, as a result of flu, measles and land-grabbing, there are only 200,000.

The first Australians, however, are beginning to use the political and legal processes to fight back. Paul Coe, the 29-year-old chairman of the Aboriginal Legal Service in Sydney, is threatening to sue the Australian and British governments in the International Court for £11,000m. compensation for the loss of traditional land.²

Coe's writ has been thrown out by the High Court in Australia, but he is determined to fight for what he regards as justice from the international community.

For aboriginal land rights have never been recognised in law in Australia. Rights, it seems, originated with the arrival of Capt. Cook in 1770!

Australian politicians refuse to take the case seriously, an indication

Continued over

How IWGIA supports indigenous peoples

SURVIVORS of the world's aboriginal populations exercise no influence over the political systems of the countries which dominate them.

They lack money, because they have been largely dispossessed of their traditional access to natural resources, so they are disregarded by the dominant elites.

Which is why organisations like the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs are vital. They articulate the sufferings and needs of the indigenous populations, despite attempts by national governments to suppress information by throwing a veil of secrecy over their exploited “natives”.

IWGIA publishes reports supplied by investigators who have lived in the relevant territories, and tries to exert influence from the outside on governments and international organisations.

But change will only finally come if there are forces generating pressure from within. So, in addition, IWGIA supplies financial aid for humanitarian projects and other activities which help the aboriginal groups to set up their own organisations to promote their case.

Reports on the scandalous treatment meted out to these groups can be bought from IWGIA, Frederiksholms Kanal 4A – DK 1220, Copenhagen K, Denmark.

of the complacency nurtured by a history of indifference towards the original human settlers of the continent.

THE URGENT need, however, is not just a backward-looking examination of land rights as they existed in pre-colonial times.

The problem is to define systems of property rights and patterns of land use which recognise the right of every human being, everywhere in the world, to share in the natural resources of the globe.

This might entail, in the case of the Amazon, consciously deciding to leave alone the existing land users. For mankind has a direct interest in preserving the forests of the basin for their vital oxygen-giving properties on which we all depend.³ It is therefore in everyone's interests to preserve the traditional cultural practices as the most effective.

Where such special considerations do not apply, it is possible to integrate both the aboriginal populations and the recent-comers into single social systems which operate in terms of justice and economic equilibrium.

Ecuador's distribution of land rights, for instance, is designed to create social friction. According to the latest figures (1974), 28% of all landholdings are smaller than one hectare; together they cover only 0.8% of cultivated land. At the other extreme, farms over 1,000 hectares account for only 0.12% of all holdings but cover 20% of cultivated land. The problem in Ecuador, as Gustavo Rodriguez reports, "is fundamentally a land problem".⁴

The challenge is to ensure that, whoever uses the land, the benefits are shared equally among all of Ecuador's citizens, be they European commercial farmers or Indian subsistence farmers in the Andes. The fiscal mechanism for securing this end is outlined on pages 36-39. Until steps are taken to actively define and implement such a solution, the conflicts over the control of natural resources will continue to jeopardise peace. War can be the only end, when one competing group loses its supreme power to repress its neighbours.

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The Wrecking Of A New Constitution

REBEL PREMIER Ian Smith of Rhodesia shed crocodile tears when he proclaimed the end of white domination over the country's Parliament.

The event was heralded as the end of 88 years of white rule. In fact, while the political composition of Parliament is changed, Smith ensured that the economic structure guarantees white control in perpetuity (barring the outcome of war). For everything turns on who owns the land.

Robert Mugabe, leader of the Patriotic Front's guerrillas, has announced that an independent Zimbabwe would nationalise foreign-owned land,¹ thus beginning a restructuring of the economy and a redistribution of income.

The importance of this single element – land tenure – in Rhodesian society was summarised by the guerrilla organisation in a statement last year:

The Land Tenure Act, the Magna Carta of Rhodesian racialism, remains the principal law governing race relations and the rights of individuals on the basis of race.²

Ian Smith has ensured that the land tenure system which guaranteed exploitation was written into the new constitution under the internal agreement reached with the black leaders.

AFRICAN resistance to the white colonialists was crushed in the 1890s, and land owned by tribes of indigenous peoples was appropriated under the Southern Rhodesia Order in Council. Thus began the systematic acquisition by white farmers of much of the most fertile land.

But it was not just farmers who moved in on the lush land. The Chartered Company, which made deep in-roads into the heart of Africa, transferred enormous areas to so-called "development companies" which turned out to consist of

speculators who were not interested in development!³

The "natives" were herded onto reserves, but after the Matabele Rebellion it was decided that they ought to be given additional land. But as Hanna records:

It was understood that the land allocated as native reserves must be land which had not been alienated to Europeans: the vast, empty spaces in European ownership on the high veld were sacrosanct.

By the 1920s the reserves were 1m acres smaller than an earlier (1902) settlement. About 23% of the land consisted of communal, rent-free reserves; 32% was owned by Europeans, and 45% was Crown land.⁴

In 1914 a commission was appointed to report on the reserves, with the explicit instruction to take account of the needs of black Africans, and to allocate enough land to meet their requirements *for all future time*. It was not to be.

For the whites who trekked from the south with guns to stake their claims to new territory had taken to heart the words of Rhodes on December 19, 1893: "You will be the first entitled to select land, and you will deal with it after provision has been made for the natives.... It is your right, for you have conquered the country."

HISTORICALLY the land of Rhodesia was divided 50:50 between blacks and whites. But the division is not as equitable as that split suggests.

For the whites consist of 3.5% of the population (1978), and their half incorporated most of the fertile land, enjoying easiest access to the major industrial and infrastructural installations (which enhance land values and are important for marketing produce).

It has been calculated that the white to black differential in per capita land availability is 88:1.⁵ The skewed distribution of natural