THE MAPUCHE OF CHILE AND THE THREAT OF LAW 2568

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"This Mapuche land decree law No. 2568 is a death certificate to the Mapuche as the Indigenous People of Chile."

> Mapuche Leader November 14, 1979

"The law legitimizes genocide."

Mapuche Leader March, 1979

On November 8, 1979, I travelled to Chile as a member of an Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Canadian Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America on a fact finding mission. It was our purpose to investigate allegations that the human rights of the Mapuche Indians were being violated as a consequence of a new law that had been passed in March, 1979, by the Chilean Government.

Law 2568 appeared as one of a series of major law and policy revisions made by the Pinochet Government in an effort to replace the socialist economic model of the previous government with a capitalist model. The Plan that has become popular as the Kelly Plan addressed three fundamental areas: the elimination of existing limits on land tenure; the establishment of investment corporations; and the privatization of Indian lands.<sup>2</sup>

The decision to end the practice of communal title of Indian land was made arbitrarily by the Pinochet Government. Indians

were never consulted and the text of the law was not available to them until after its official declaration in March, 1979.

The division of tribal lands among individual occupants who will hold legal title to their plots has disastrous implications for the Mapuche. Small land holders will almost certainly be bought out by the large land holders and corporate businesses. Like all Indigenous people, the Mapuche hold a covenant with the land. The land is their source of being and without it they would cease to be. Without the land the Mapuche would lose their cohesiveness, their strength and their sense of self. This is the future that Mapuche leaders see when they say, "Law No. 2568 legitimizes genocide."

The new law carries with it a number of irregularities that ensures that alienation of Mapuche lands will take place. Any person who resides on or works the land, Mapuche or non-Mapuche, has the status of a "comunero" and may request for the division of the land. Only one "occupant" has to request for a division and the process will be carried out. The new law itself explicitly excludes appeal; there is no process for reaction to this law.

Already a mechanism, the Institute for Agricultural Development, has been established to facilitate the divison of Indian lands.

The Minister of Agriculture has been assigned the task of implementing the new law. Health and education services for Mapuches have been handed over to the respective federal ministries or private agencies, openly denying the existence of special status and rights of Indian people. What is more, the new law discusses Indian people only in relation to the existence of Indian lands; nowhere in the text

is the term "Indian" defined. In its definition of the term "Indian" the previous law No. 17.729, recognized the existence of the Mapuche as a race, a distinct cultural group within a nation. Law No. 17.729 recognized the cultural uniqueness of the Mapuche and the existence of aboriginal rights.

A closer look at Mapuche culture and colonial history will place the nature and the extent of the threat of Law No. 2568 in perspective.

The Mapuche are a people, indigenous to Southern Chile, that number about 500,000.<sup>6</sup> An estimated 450,000 live in the rural areas, and the remainder, 50,000, have emigrated to the urban centres.<sup>7</sup> The largest concentration of Mapuche is in the Province of Cautin where they compose 46.5% of a population of 232,000.<sup>8</sup>

At present the Mapuche hold 566,000 hectares (approximately 1.5 million acres; 1 hectare is equivalent to 2.7 acres) in the southern provinces of Bio Bio, Arauco, Malleco, Cautin, Valdivia, and Osorno, which constitutes only 8% of the total land base of these provinces.

On a per capita distribution of 566,000 hectares each Mapuche would have 1.9 hectares (a little over 5 acres). 1.9 hectares for each Mapuche is a significant decrease from 6.9 hectares (19 acres) per capita available at the turn of the century. 10 Lands were lost through white encroachment, illegal or disputable land sales and cessions. About 20% of the Mapuche lands were divided in the period between 1931 and 1961, at which time Mapuche lands were considered alienable. Many plots were sold; others seized because of default in payment of loans where the land was held as collateral. 11 All Chilean Indian Policy has been aimed.

at the termination of Indian lands and opposes the Mapuche tradition of tribal land ownership and shared work.

The Mapuche have held fast to their culture -- their spiritual values, world view, and their language. It is this strong cultural identity and a resilient culture that strengthens their resistance against the Chilean society that attempts to assimilate them.

The Mapuche have struggled for over five hundred years to keep their lands. Theirs is a story of strength and determination.

In the 1400's they were invaded from the north by the Incas, whom they successfully repelled despite their superior technology and organization. The Mapuche were protected well by the rugged terrain of Southern Chile and their intricate knowledge of it. 12

In 1536, Spanish forces under Diego Almagro first attempted to encroach on Mapuche lands. <sup>13</sup> The Spanish army's horses, guns, and swords, when pitted against the guerilla tactics of the Mapuche, were rendered useless. By about 1560 the Mapuche had begun to build up their cavalry from horses taken from the Spanish. Aided by new and well-developed tactics, the Mapuche were able to keep the Spanish at bay through many skirmishes and two major wars occurring in 1868-70 and 1880-83.

In exasperation, one Spanish Governor of Chile wrote the King of Spain, saying: "The war with the Mapuches has cost more than the conquest of all the rest of America."

The Spanish desisted for a while and built their forts at the edge of Mapuche territory.

During the time of the wars, German and European immigrants settled the area south of the La Fontera on Mapuche territory.

In 1884 Chile achieved independence from Spain and was able to place the armies in Mapuche territory. The armies were those that had recently returned from the War of the Pacific. The Mapuche were finally defeated after a long struggle to safe-guard their lands.

After the defeat of the Mapuches the Chilean Government settled them on reserves of land (reducciones) and the remaining land was auctioned off to the white Chileans. There were no treaties or agreements ceding this land. The Settlement Commission gave out land titles (titalos de merced) to community leaders (lonkos) who held the land for the whole community. Fortunately, this system closely paralleled the traditional practice of communal land ownership and did much to maintain the Mapuche as a people. Some 200 families did not receive title to their land and are now considered to have no legal or formal title to their lands. 15

In 1929 the judges for Indian Affairs were created and had the authority to divide up Indian lands. Division required a one-third consent of the total population. Individual land plots came to 1.5 hectares (4.05 acres) in size. <sup>16</sup> The legality of many of these land divisions is questionable as the judges were well known for their corruption. Much of the divided land ended up in the hands of the large land owners. The judges worked in close collaboration with the National Agricultural Society (SNA) which represents the major land holders. What was once Indian land was so fragmented that the strength of the Mapuches as a group was weakened, and the economic growth of the community impeded.

Between 1929 and 1961 many laws were passed that completed the reservation system and facilitated the privatization of Indian lands.

By 1960 the Mapuche were involved in an active struggle to regain usurped lands. Of the 600,000 hectares (1.5 million acres) legally assigned to the Mapuche only half remained. <sup>17</sup> Much of this land was lost through the moving of fence boundaries each year until only half of the land remained. <sup>18</sup>

In 1961, Indian lands were legally decreed "inalienable" and could only be ceded by judicial authorization within the Mapuche courts or by popular consent. Five Indian tribunals were established to allow the Mapuches to dispense Chilean justice to their own people. 19

Under the Alessandri Government land that was not being utilized by the land lords was expropriated with fair compensation and given to the Indians and peasants. 1,362 hectares were returned to the Mapuches.<sup>20</sup>

In 1967-70, the Christian Democrat government of Frei continued the agrarian regorm. However this time no Indian lands were returned, nor were Indians included in plans to restore Indian lands.

In 1970 Allende was elected, and he did much to speed up agrarian property expropriations. Property exceeding 80 hectares (216 acres) was expropriated. Expropriated lands had to be organized as co-operatives in order to obtain technical aid and credit. The Mapuches became incorporated into this system often sharing in co-operatives with non-Mapuches. About 50,000 Mapuches were integrated into the reformed sectors. The problems of the Mapuches were not solved by Allende as with all other colonial governments.

Poverty and discrimination continued to exist. However, the Mapuches

were able to organize and form local councils composed of Mapuche leaders, representing Mapuche interests. Some claims to land were recognized and settled in this period.

Allende also provided for the establishment of the Institution for Indigenous Development (IDI) through Law 17.729 in 1972.

The IDI worked to promote social, economic, educational and cultural development. The IDI had the capacity of a legal entity, and existed as an independent organization of the state. It had its own working capital to acquire resources, endorse laws, and it was free to make its own decisions. The functions of the IDI included the granting of credit; technical and administrative aid to Indians and peasants; planning expropriations, restitution and the distribution of lands. Mapuches were allowed the use of credit and development agencies in which the state owned a major share. Literacy and farming courses were made available to them.

At the time of these changes, an anti-agrarian, anti-Indian backlash occurred carried out by the National Agricultural Society (SNA) and the Chilean Farmers' Employers Confederation (Consemach). These organizations boycotted production, killed livestock, burned harvest and forcibly took control of the distribution of agricultural products.<sup>24</sup>

After the overthrow of Allende's government on September 11, 1973, the Mapuche who had benefitted during the time of the Allende Government once again became a target of repression as presumed supporters of Allende. 25

In an attempt to repossess the lands lost through redistribution,

the large landholders, with the aid of the army and carabineros (The National Police Force) carried out massacres among the Mapuche. Mass killings took place at Lautis, Cunco, Meli Peuco, Henventue in Cautin; Longuimy in Melleco; and Panguelpull in Valdiva. 26

The viciousness with which the massacres were carried out by the land holders reflected their need to revenge the temporary loss of their power. 27 Mapuches were killed at random; some simply because they could not speak Spanish. Mapuche corpses floating down the river and army trucks piled high with dead bodies were not uncommon sights. According to some doctors in Temuco, dozens of corpses, riddled with bullets, were brought to the morgue daily. 29

A doctor who attempted to give medical treatment to the Mapuches was jailed and her husband executed. 30

One of the leaders at the Temuco reserve told members of the fact finding mission of Indians who had been hunted down like animals by the soldiers and police. In these raids communities were pillaged, houses burnt and many killed. This leader was imprisoned, beaten and denied communication for days, like so many others. Many leaders were killed and others simply disappeared. 31

Once again Mapuche lands were being seized and Mapuches were being denied employment and credit. 32 This was a return to extreme poverty and misery. Once again lack of proper food, clothing, shelter, and poor health dominated Mapuche lives.

It is clear that the government of General Pinochet plans to alienate the remaining communal lands of the Mapuche, terminate their status and rights and ultimately end the existence of the Mapuches as a racial and cultural group. This intent is capsulized in the words of the Minister of Agriculture:

"In Chile there are no Indians, only Chileans." 33

Whereas the previous law allowed for the restoration and protection of Mapuche lands, the primary intent of Law 2568 is the elimination of Indian lands through division. Given the conditions for division it is almost certain that Mapuche lands will be alienated. For division to occur only one occupant need request it even if the majority are in disagreement. Furthermore, there is no legal recourse for appeal within the country. The absence of a process for appeal was confirmed by our meeting with the Judge of the Appeal Court and two lawyers in Temuco. They explained to us that the judge can only process the request of a division of communal property before him. He cannot deal with any related matters such as dissensions to the division. In Chile, judges apply the law; they do not interpret it. 34

Law 2568 even provides for the enforcement of the judge's decision by the police. The summons to appear before a judge in the case of land division is published in the newspaper of the regional capital only. There are no newspapers available to the Mapuche reserves, therefore a reserve could be divided without the members (comuneros) being aware of it. 35

When a request for a division is made, the officials of the INDAP (National Agricultural Development Institute) conduct the topographical studies of the area. They map out the boundaries and decide who will receive the lots. The Indian people have no part in this study. Although the judge makes the final decision, it is the officials of INDAP who compile the information required. The judge uses no other sources of information; thus these officials weild a lot of power.

There are documented reports which show that even prior to the declaration of the new Law 2569, INDAP officials visited Indian communities intimidating people, and forcing them to sign undated forms requesting division of their lands. People were told that unless they signed these forms they would be left without land when allotments were made and they would be ineligible for credit and other kinds of aid. This coercement started before Law 2569 came into force and continues. In this way, INDAP officials were able to obtain most signed forms. At the same time, in anticipation of a strong reaction from Indian people, a new wave of terror was directed against Mapuches. As in the early days of the Pinochet Government there have been num erous reports of killings and missing leaders. 37

Despite these attempts to quell the Mapuche, they have embarked on a campaign against the oppressive intents of Law 2569. Leaders have begun organizing through Mapuche cultural centers, which number about 900, to represent the true interests of their people and provide them aid.

Law 2568 is one of a series of major law and policy revisions intended to change the economy of Chile. The Pinochet Government has adopted a capitalist form of economy to replace the socialist model of Allende. The economic model adopted by the Pinochet Government is based on the Chicago School economic model devised by the economist Milton Friedman. This school of thought emphasizes free enterprise, private ownership, minimal government control in the economy and voluntary social services. The model is based on the premise that this type of free enterprise best stimulates and regulates international and national economies. True to its

adopted economic philosophy, the Chilean economy has been privatized, once again thrusting national economic interests into the hands of multinational corporations.

As of 1978, 449 of 464 state-owned enterprises have been auctioned off to a select group of national and multinational foreign corporations. 39 Ten million hectares of land have been returned to the large landholders and private farmers. Among the lands given to these groups are Mapuche lands. 40 The privatization of social services resulted in a smaller civil service and cutbacks in public spending, particularly in health, housing, education and social security. 41

Such measures have naturally resulted in the drastic reduction of essential services to the majority of the population who are forced to oppose such measures in an effort to avoid hardship.

Organized effort to resist these drastic changes are met with a system of social control utilizing repressive measures. The application of these measures has focussed on those who are most affected by those changes brought about by the new economic policy. This has resulted in the persecution of trade and labour union leaders and the impairment of these organizations. The ultimate consequence has been the repression of the working people and the

To justify these measures, both the economic and the repressive, are reduced labour costs and ineffective trade unions which create the kind of situation which attracts foreign investment. Investment is one of the most desired and requisite features of such an economy.

The following ad assuring investors that Chile was safe for

investment appeared in the <u>Wall Street Journal</u>: "Tranquility and stability in all sectors of the labour force, plus a high standard of technical and professional skills are readily available." Chile is touted as a safety zone for foreign investors. U.S. and Canadian businessmen applaud the economic atmosphere and policy of Chile. Ralph Cox, Anaconda's President, made this comment: "We have come back to Chile not only because of the mining prospects, but because this government has created a climate of confidence for investment."

Chile turned to private bank borrowing when European donors, as members of multinational aid institutions, set rights criteria on loans to repressive governments. Repression in Chile also resulted in failure to have its 1975 debt rescheduled in full. As international aid from public multilateral institutions decreased, private bank loans jumped from less than 25% in 1973 to 90% of the total foreign borrowing in 1978.

The practice of considering human rights in the formulation of economic policy is an honourable development among donor nations. It proves an advanced humanity. U.S. and Canadian banks have been somehow able to overlook what European donors could not. U.S. banks have been steadily increasing loans to Chile since 1973. "During 1978, Chile's loans from private multinational banks totalled one billion dollars, with U.S. banks providing \$927 million." These banks include Citicorp, Morgan Guaranty Trust, Wells Fargo, Chemical Bank of New York, and First Chicago For 1978 and 1979 these banks have arranged for more than \$800 million dollars in loans to the Chilean government. The Canadian banks concerned include the Royal Bank of Canada, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Toronto Dominion and the Bank of Montreal. Private companies in Chile "are receiving



2-3 calls a week, principally from U.S. banks, asking them if they want any money."47

The activities of these banks which finance the present Chilean Government undermine the advancement of humanity. Along with North American banks, North American corporations are considered Chile's primary investors. "The biggest foreign investment in Chile, at least in terms of potential, has been made by Exxon, the world's biggest industrial corporation. At the end of 1977, ENAMI, the National Mining Company, announced that it had sold 87% of the outstanding stock of the Las Condes Mining Company to Exxon Minerals for \$107 million. Exxon has since offered to buy the shares still privately held, and has received acceptances for a large proportion."48 Noranda Mines Ltd. (a Canadian Company), active in Chile since 1964, agreed to return to Chile after the coup and reclaim its 49% share in Chile Canadian Mines, Noranda's subsidiary. Noranda was the first to invest in Chile after the coup, placing \$600,000 of new capital in its Chilean mines. 49 This support to the new regime resulted in the January 1976 grant to Noranda of the right to develop Chile's most valued copper reserve, the Andocollo deposit in northern Chile. 50

Other investments in Chile include General Motors Corporation, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, and Dow Chemical. "We took over our old assembly plant, which had been leased to the government since our withdrawl in '71," says Manager Albert J. Buchanan, of General Motors, "we have 33% of the market now and '78 was a good year for earnings . . ." Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company moved into Chile in 1977 with a \$34 million dollar investment. Manager Jack Carter stated, "I don't think we spent five minutes talking

about human rights when the board made the decision to invest in Chile." Dow Chemical returned to manage a plant at Talcahuano in 1974. There are also small U.S. manufacturers like Hefty Tractor Company of Juneau, Wisconsin moving in to manufacture products, more than half of which are for export.

Other Canadian investments in Chile include Bata Industries
Ltd. (Don Mills, Ontario), Caristrap Corporation (Chomedy, Quebec),
Forano Ltd. (Plessessville, Quebec), Longyear Diamond Products Canada Ltd. (North Bay, Ontario), and Wajax Ltd. (Ottawa, Ontario). 53

According to the Report of the 'ICCHRPLA' Delegation to Chile (1978), the Canadian Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce Trade Commissioner reported that at the end of 1978 the Chilean Government "is encouraging foreign investment on terms which are generous by Latin American standards." 54

The assasination in Washington, D.C. of the exiled Chilean leader, Orlando Letelier, and subsequent investigations, have increased tensions between the Pinochet regime and the Carter administration. Chile has refused to bring to trial three army officers implicated in the murder. Despite this and accumulated evidence gathered by the United Nations on Human Rights Violations in Chile (Resolution 33/175), the U.S. has done nothing to curtail banks or private industry investing in Chile. Unlike some European nations, the U.S. has not developed its humanitarianism beyond the rhetorical stage. Americans still do not accept responsibility for the consequences of their economic involvement in foreign places.

North American participation in Chile's economy through foreign investment or aid in loans is really a stamp of approval for the violations of basic human rights that create and perpetuate the present favourable investment climate. North American investment gains from Chile accrue directly from the provision of cheap labour which is made possible through the oppression of the labour force. As well, North American financial support of the Chilean economy enhances the military budget, at times used in repressive acts.

The financial gain of a few investors in an economic policy based on oppression results in the impoverishment of many. A testimony to this fact is the social, economic and political conditions under which the Mapuche must live. Mapuche living conditions in Chile are characterized by poverty, hunger, a high infant mortality; poor health, housing and clothing. Today, most Mapuche families live in small huts measuring approximately 12 feet by 14 feet, which are damp, dark, unventilated, and with only a small open fire in the middle of the floor for cooking and warmth. Their diet consists mainly of carbohydrates such as flour, wheat and potatoes. Meat is very scarce and little protein is derived from the small quantities of beans, peas, and lentils which they can grow. 55 The average cumunero householder has one hectare (2.7 acres) of arable land which must provide for his family's needs. 56 Their already meagre source of livelihood is now threatened with certain loss upon alienation of their land by Law 2568.

The loss of the subsistence economic base compounded by employment discrimination spells certain annihilation. Without income to pay for medical and educational services the Mapuche have no hope for survival. The privatization of medical and educational institutions deprive low and no-income groups in the Chilean society of basic services and condemns them to perpetual poverty or

extinction. This is the condition in which the Mapuche find themselves today. They have been the hardest hit of all segments of Chilean population that have been victimized since the coup.

In view of this extreme misery and the flagrant violations of the political and cultural rights of the Mapuche Indians, and in view of the Western Nations' contributions to these, all Western National Governments must develop foreign aid and investment policies to reflect pronouncements on human rights and democracy and protection of indigenous peoples.

All Western Governments can set an example for the world by their treatment of Indigenous populations, domestically. The example to be set requires abandonment of the termination policy, most recently articulated by the White Paper Policy of 1969 in Canada. The Canadian Government must stop all attempts to diminish the legislative protection for the lands and rights of its Indigenous populations. The fate of the Mapuche under Law 2568 would be the same for Indians of Canada and the U.S. under similar legislative lacts. This reverting back to early colonial disregard of the rights of Indigenous Nations now initiated by the Chilean Government should not be accepted as the precedent for other states to follow.

On this issue, all Western Governments can demonstrate the sincerity of their recent endorsement of the United Nations Covenants protecting social, economic, political and cultural rights. Governments like the U.S. and Canada must clean up their own indigenous policies at home and regulate the actions of their citizens in other countries to protect these newly developed standards of humanity, and ensure their implimentation.

The Mapuche have a strong will to survive as a people in spite of the overwhelming odds against them. They are poor in terms of material wealth, but they are rich in spiritual strength. Their strength is derived from their culture and it reflects in their songs and speeches. Law 2568 is a blatant violation of their human rights; it is a serious threat to humanity in this world. An allout effort must be made by all nations to bring pressure on the Chilean Government to repeal Law 2568.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1. See Appendix A for more detailed information on the Fact Finding Commission.
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- 9. Ibid.
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- 12. New York Circus, the Mapuches: A Call to Solidarity, Mapuche People of the Land, (New York 1978), p.1.
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- 30. Ibid., p.3.
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- 32. New York Circus, The Mapuches: A Call to Solidarity, Mapuche: People of the Land, (New York, 1978), p.3.
- 33. Preliminary Report of the Fact Finding Commission to Chile, November 1979, ICCHRLA, <u>Introduction</u>.
- 34. Notes from an interview with a lawyer in Temuco, Chile, November 1979, by members of the Fact Finding Commission, ICCHRLA.
- 35. Preliminary Report of the Fact Finding Commission to Chile, November 1979, The New Law. Sec. II.
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- 40. Ibid.
- 41. Ibid.
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