

“For Life, Land, Work and Peace; Indigenous, Peasant and Public Unity”

On the 14th Anniversary of the Committee of Peasant Unity [Spanish initials: CUC], to all our members both men and women; to the structures, committees, associations, [and] cooperatives; to indigenous organisations, sisters, friends and to international solidarity:

WE DECLARE:

In this year when 500 years of European invasion have passed, years which brought us genocide, ethnocide, cultural oppression, [and] exploitation with all its present consequences, we have completed FOURTEEN YEARS OF ORGANIZATION AND BATTLE against the roots of these injustices and towards recovering our rights in the political, cultural, social and economic life of our country. Our CUC was born of belief in the necessity for unity of [progressive] forces, because we all have a place in the organization and in [its] battle. These, then, have been fourteen years of intensive work; of pain, sacrifice and resistance; of confidence and hope in which little by little we, the victims of discrimination, have been heard and have taken the place that belongs to us.

This year 1992, which should be a year of reflection, of responses to our ethnic, political, social and economic demands, should [also] bring to an end the ambitions of power, wealth, and personal aggrandizement of the super-rich [class]. But [instead] we have begun the year with general repression, with threats against the leaders of [both] rural and urban organizations; with forceful expulsions of settlers who demand land in marginal districts; [with] compulsory military enlistment, accompanied by threats of kidnapping against youths who fail to present themselves; [and] with tax increases that strike those who are poorest. On the plantations of the South Coast there are massive layoffs, starvation-level wages [in that] they don't even pay 10 Quetzales (US\$2) [a day] nor the 1.20 Quetzales (US\$0.25) bonus, in contrast to the ever-increasing cost of living, on account of which our hunger cries out in all the hamlets, districts and settlements.

The slaughter of Mayas continues; for instance: the recent massacre of [our] Tzutujíl brothers in Santiago Atitlán on February ninth of this year; the forceful expulsion of [our] Cakchiquél brothers of San Jorge La Laguna, Sololá [Department], including more than 30 wounded and 74 imprisoned. [Also] the kidnapping of Diego Martín Domingo, of Mam origin, on the 8th of November a year ago in Huehuetenango. [Also] the massacre in Ciudad Peronia of displaced Quichés. [Also] the repression, on Good Friday, of students at the University of San Carlos de Guatemala, committed by the so-called Task Force “Hunajpú”, resulting in one dead and seven wounded. This is what one can see immediately, but how many of our brothers have disappeared in unknown assassinations? It is an alarming situation that is developing in our country, alongside the process of dialogue among the government, the military, and the URNG. Therefore, we plead that all this not remain unknown, [and] we demand judgement and punishment of the

material and intellectual authors of every one of these deeds. We reject and repudiate the use of a sacred Maya name [by an organization] for the destruction of human life.

In this [year] 1992, the demands of our refugee and displaced brothers to return to their places of origin must be heard, [they] who had to hide themselves on account of persecution and repression. The Communities of Population in Resistance — PR — have the right to be recognised as civil populations in their own territories [so as] to be able to live as [do people in] any other re-gion, hamlet, or municipality, [and] to have freedom of organization, movement, [and] enterprise, [as well as] access to education, health, housing, and every kind of [human right].

We have passed 500 years since our lands were invaded. Moreover, throughout those years abuses, robbery, [and] plunder have continued; [among the] deceptions has been the purchase of lands by falsification of titles with assumed ‘new owners’. Meanwhile we, the true owners, are cornered in the ravines, on the slopes, in the mountains or even on the plantations as ranchers or peasants, in work crews and as labourers to weed and make productive the lands of the “patron-landholder”. The land tenure problem must come to an end and [result in a] change, [but] “how?” is the matter we must consider, analyse, and seek out the correct path [towards] so that we obtain our legitimate proprietorship. The times demand it, hunger calls out for it. We must end these 500 years of great injustice and begin another part of our history with more respect, justice and harmony between our peoples. Therefore, the lands of our displaced refugee brothers should be returned to them; those serfs who have spent generations on the plantations of the South Coast and the Altiplano must have their demands for land tenure heard and [likewise] for all landless peasants and the populations of marginal areas that need a piece of land to cultivate and a roof to live [under].

To ACHIEVE PEACE, the active participation of all sectors is necessary, in a dialogue among Government, Army, and URNG. It is impossible that we Mayas, who are the majority, [and] the [other] peasants and poor Ladinos, [that] those who most suffer the effects of war and exploitation, should be marginalised in this dialogue; that is why we want peace, but a peace that is felt and lived in social, economic and political changes that favour the majority and not just in speeches and document signings. It is in this battle for peace that the NOMINATION OF OUR COMRADE RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ FOR THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE OF 1992 was essential.

Along with our fourteenth anniversary, we are celebrating the MAYA NEW YEAR, on this 21st of April, THE WAJXAKIB BATZ [8 monkey]. It is an occasion for us, the indigenous people, to reflect deeply on what it means to be Maya. With the beheading of our Maya scientists, scholars [and] theologians, plus the burning of our sacred and historical libraries, the attempt at our extermination is evident; but thanks to THE HEART OF THE SKY AND THE HEART OF THE LAND, we have been able to preserve ourselves, hide ourselves, and resist for hundreds of years.

We have deep values such as respect for life, life in harmony with MOTHER NATURE, to seek and hold that which is necessary, [and] to be part of and in service to the community; these are very real in the midst of this world in which only a few dispose of power and wealth, [while] the rest may die of hunger or be killed [outright]. In this Maya New Year we salute our Maya priests and priestesses, [likewise] all of us who have, and feel, Maya blood in our being, with the aim of deepening, and living out more intensely than ever, that which we are. Let us rise up and walk with the wisdom and thought of our ancestors.

Lastly, we wish to offer our fraternal salutations, on this INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LABOUR, to the women, men and children who day by day support our country with their sweat and labour. There is no alternative to INDIAN, PEASANT AND POPULAR UNITY to seek answers to our needs and demands. In this sense we encourage the just struggle of our brothers who have been dismissed from factories and farms, now gathered before the National Palace. In this year 1992, in which 500 years of exploitation and oppression end, may our awareness of national, regional and continental unity awaken and grow yet greater; because the hour of the poor and discriminated-against has arrived, [when] UNITED WE SHALL SEIZE OUR LEGITIMATE RIGHTS.

WE CALL OUT:

To Maya, Ladino, peasant, artisan, worker, Christian, student, teacher, institutional, non-governmental, male, female, young and old ‘brothers’, to all without prejudice to any, we exhort you to strengthen our groups and organizations so as to achieve coordinated action towards the resolution of our problems and needs. To those who stand in international solidarity with us, we plead that you be alert and respond energetically to the new wave of oppression unleashed against the indigenous, peasant, union and popular movements and to the violation of human rights in general.

VIVA THE FOURTEENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMITTEE OF PEASANT UNITY — CUC
HAPPY MAYA NEW YEAR, WAJXAKIB BATZ
FOR LIFE, LAND, WORK AND PEACE: INDEGENOUS, PEASANT AND POPULAR UNITY

[From the] clear heads
United hearts
[And] battling fists of the field workers.

Guatemala, 21 April 1992

COMMITTEE OF PEASANT UNITY— CUC
MEMBER OF UASP

The text above, in Spanish and under the CUC letterhead, was received as Appendix 2 in a research paper compiled for a 'Special Topics' reading course with me by Mr. Rodolfo Pino-Robles, M.A. student in the Department of Native Studies.

Translation completed 22 November 1994 by Dr. Michael R. Wilson, Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon SK. This version edited for omissions & errors on 4 January 2008.