

# IWGIA

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUP FOR INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS  
FREDERIKSHOLMS KANAL 4A - DK 1220 COPENHAGEN K - DENMARK

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IWGIA IS A NONPOLITICAL AND NONRELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION,  
CONCERNED WITH CURRENT PROBLEMS OF SUPPRESSION  
AGAINST ETHNIC GROUPS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES

## Newsletter

August 1971

### IWGIA, its work and experiences 1968-71:

The International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) was established by an international group of anthropologists present at the 38th International Congress of Americanists in Stuttgart, August 1968.

The initiative to form the work group was taken after a number of colleagues had presented some detailed documentation on crimes and abuses committed against Indian populations in a number of South-American countries. These crimes often included killings, various acts of terrorism, as well as the alienation of native lands.

In Stuttgart, two Scandinavian anthropologists, Lars Persson and Helge Kleivan, were asked to act as "ad-hoc" chairman and secretary, respectively. After 3 years of existence, IWGIA's work and development can be summarized as follows:

From late 1968 and throughout 1969, much time and efforts were spent trying to create an awareness of the problem among the people of the Scandinavian countries. In order to spread information on the current situation, particularly with regard to the fate of the Indian populations of South-America, Persson and Kleivan wrote a number of articles and comments for the press, while also addressing public audiences and taking part in programs on radio and television. Lars Persson also gave press interviews and took part in TV programs in Holland and West Germany.

During the summer of 1969 Lars Persson visited Colombia, the U.S.A. and Canada. On his return, IWGIA arranged for a press conference to be held in Copenhagen, where he presented a report on the current situation.

Since 1968, Bent Østergaard of Amnesty International and P. Herskind Diemar of the Anti Slavery Society have done much to support the work of IWGIA.

In June 1969, after information had been received that crimes and abuses against Indian populations were still taking place in various countries, IWGIA urged colleagues everywhere to appeal to their governments, prompting them to act through the United Nations and other international bodies. This request was immediately acted upon by colleagues in Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden (and

later also in Holland and Peru), who appealed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of their respective countries. Expressions of sympathy for the work of IWGIA were received from two ministers, but no direct initiative was taken or indicated.

At last, in the winter of 1969-70, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to discuss IWGIA's proposal to establish field groups which would make surveys of the present situation in some of the most critical areas of South-America. In December 1969, IWGIA's secretary met with Mr. Paul Hartling, the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs. When presented with a direct request, the Minister promised to help financing the field groups.

In the early part of 1970, the chairman and secretary of IWGIA, together with Dr. Niels Fock representing the Danish Ethnographic Association, participated in meetings with representatives of the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden). These meetings were held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Copenhagen, and the question of organizing field groups in a number of South-American countries was discussed. The IWGIA's representatives presented a detailed budget for the ~~creation~~ of ~~two~~ field groups to be sent to the Peruvian selva ; this plan had been worked out in close cooperation with our colleague Dr. Stefano Varese of Lima. Despite the promise made in December 1969 by the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs, both Danish and Swedish Government's spokesmen now maintained that there could be no question of granting any money for such field groups, unless direct requests had been received from the governments of the countries in question.

Regrettably, no effort has been made by any of the Nordic governments to use their diplomatic representation in South-America so as to bring forth requests for the financing of field groups. Especially discouraging has been the Swedish government's refusal to comply with an official Colombian request of November 1970 for financial aid to organize field groups, a proposal resulting from Lars Persson's negotiations with the Colombian authorities and anthropologists in the autumn of 1970.

However, these deplorable experiences concerning our appeals to national governments should not paralyse our efforts to expose the problems of forced acculturation and integration. New ways of thinking, organizing and implementing our objectives seem to be needed. But the "ad-hoc" committee cannot adequately cope with all these problems and the task in front of us requires active participation by all seriously concerned.

#### Aims and activities of IWGIA:

Two years have passed since the last Newsletter. On the background of our various experiences it is necessary to restate and rethink the aims and activities of IWGIA. And if the organization is to continue a work that is more necessary than ever, it seems imperative that all those concerned take part in these discussions.

Most of our efforts during the last two years have been spent trying to make official authorities aware of the suppression of ethnic groups. These attempts must continue, although the prospects are sometimes rather sad.

The first aim of IWGIA is to investigate the background and consequences of the present critical situation faced by a great many ethnic groups in various parts of the world, and as far as possible to counteract and remedy these problems. In trying to achieve this goal, a number of possibilities come to mind: a) to establish field groups which could provide information and analysis of the current problems; b) to try obtaining consultative status under ECOSOC; c) to help the oppressed groups by the establishment of channels of communication with regard to their desire of contact and development; d) to publish reports, documents, theoretical investigations and bibliographies; e) to encourage the anthropologist to rethink and re-evaluate his own position and the position of his science in relation to the present situation faced by his "object" of research in many parts of the world; f) finally, and providing enough people become active in this, we could intensify our efforts to inform and involve the general public.

We hope that many of the present members as well as other colleagues will participate in debating how to best implement these proposals, as well as making suggestions for other possible activities.

Documentary evidence, financing and organization:

The most urgent problem for the moment is to provide and distribute detailed documentary evidence and at the same time to get IWGIA more firmly organized.

Documentary evidence. As part of Newsletter we have started a series of articles and documents. The first two (which you will find enclosed) illustrate what we hope the series to be: analyses and evidence on recent incidents of forced integration and acculturation (see No.2), and analysis and political statements on the position of indigenous groups (see No.1).

We urge all persons concerned to provide for publication in the series this kind of documentary evidence on crimes and abuses against ethnic groups. We would also welcome more theoretical articles.

Financing: The work of IWGIA cannot continue unless money is raised for the printing and distribution of Newsletter and for the secretarial service. The present secretariat will try raising money from private sources and some government departments. However, this is a very uncertain way of providing funds. Therefore, we urge everyone concerned to send dollars 3.00 to the secretariat (see 'Reply Letter').

Organization: It is our hope that by the beginning of next year the organization will be so well established that the secretariat will be able to work on a more regular basis. Up to now, the secretariat has been engaged in a wide range of activities (see above 'IWGIA, its work and experiences 1968-71), and to fulfil its

task the secretariat has been enlarged. It now includes the following members:

Peter Aaby, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Klaus Ferdinand, Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Aarhus, Denmark.

Helge Kleivan, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

Karl Eric Knutsson, Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Stockholm,  
Sweden.

Lars Persson, University of Lund, Sweden.

Axel Sommerfelt, Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Oslo, Norway.

Bent Østergaard, Amnesty International, Copenhagen, Denmark.

The prerequisites for a greater stability and strength of the organization are a diversified field of activities, that the organization be able to finance by itself some of these activities, and that the organization be based on the active participation of many members. If the first two conditions are not met the organization could easily be paralysed whenever its work is faced with difficulties, - an eventuality which seems more than likely.

Below, we have mentioned some of the more concrete problems faced by the organization and we hope that many members will advise the secretariat on these matters (see 'Reply Letter'). During the autumn, another Newsletter will try to summarize these responses and put to vote the matters on which there is no commonly accepted opinion. We hope in this way to solve some of the organizational problems of IWGIA.

#### The problems.

The organization would be constituted by the following units: a) members (individual or institutions); b) local work groups; c) the international secretariat; d) an international board of scientists.

The constitution and responsibilities of these units would be detailed as follows:

The international secretariat would be responsible for the editing and distribution of Newsletter and the Yearbook to the local work groups and the members. Should elections be necessary, the secretariat would arrange them at regular intervals.

Whenever the secretariat is able to secure the necessary money, it could originate directly some of the projects. However, should a local work group be in a better position to carry out a particular project, it would seem better for the secretariat to transfer the responsibility for the project to this local group.

The secretariat could either be permanent or subjected to election (perhaps every two years). In the later case, persons would be eligible for election when nominated by one or more local groups.

To transfer the secretariat from one place to another might cause some delay in the editing and distribution of Newsletter, but otherwise it should bring no serious

problems, provided this is not at variance with the requirements for consultative status under ECOSOC. Any project started by a secretariat could be carried out by the same persons even after having stopped being part of the secretariat, simply because these persons would continue their work through their own local work groups. All in all, it would seem beneficial to the organization as a whole not to see always the same members being responsible for the international communications.

Newsletter should contain information, documentary evidence, and articles on all subjects relevant to the aims of the organization. Owing to considerations of space the secretariat might feel obliged to shorten some of the material submitted for publication.

To distribute Newsletter directly from the secretariat to all members would require fairly substantial funding, and it might be better (and certainly less expensive) if the Newsletters were sent from the secretariat to the local groups where they would be mimeographed and distributed to their members.

The Yearbook would contain articles, bibliographies, and surveys. If members feel that the organization should have such a yearbook, the annual fees to be paid to the secretariat would then necessarily increase so as to cover the cost of printing and distribution. If it is decided against the creating of a yearbook, the various articles, bibliographies and surveys, etc., would have to be included within the framework of Newsletter.

Documentation center. When the organization succeeds in establishing a documentation center, it may not be practical to transfer this center together with the secretariat, whenever there is a new election for the secretariat (of course, only if members agree on the necessity of holding such elections). This means that the documentation center may be permanently located in Copenhagen, or somewhere else in Scandinavia. However, this is not yet an urgent question since we must wait before taking any decision until we can evaluate more precisely the importance of a documentation center for the work of the secretariat.

The local work groups would be responsible for distributing the yearbook and the Newsletters to all their members. These groups might also wish to publish a local supplement to Newsletter.

It seems important to consider whether the local work groups should decide for themselves how to organize their activities, how to elect their management, and how much their members shall pay to finance their local activities. It should also be decided whether the local groups should have the right and obligation to involve themselves in all the activities of the international organization or only in some of them.

If the organization is to be successful it seems imperative that the local work groups become very active, since they are in an ideal position to obtain a maximum

of information about "indigenous affairs" and also to raise money for their particular projects.

We hope that it will be possible to establish work groups in most cities with university departments of anthropology or other social sciences. One local work group has recently been formed in Lund (Sweden), and if members are interested similar groups could be formed in the other university cities of Scandinavia.

Members. Subscription to Newsletter and the Yearbook, obtainable directly from the Secretariat, should be made available to all individuals and institutions. Only individuals would have the right to vote in matters decided through election.

The annual fee for members of local work groups will depend on how the distribution of Newsletter is carried out.

The International board of Scientists: The purpose of this board would be to provide expertise and to implement a potential consultative status under ECOSOC. Like the secretariat, this board could be elected for a definite period of time. However, it seems that the most urgent task at present is the creation to secure the financial help needed to establish an international board of scientists.

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These are no more than suggestions and proposals made by the secretariat. On these, as on all other matters, we would very much appreciate the help and advice of all concerned.

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On IWGIA's Colombian project:

As a result of consultations with Colombian officials during the last three years, Lars Persson of IWGIA, in September 1970, could start constructive planning together with the Colombian Minister of the Interior, the heads of the Indian Bureau and the Department of Social Development and Integration, and with a number of Colombian anthropologists.

The Colombian authorities accepted the main points of IWGIA's plan for the protection of the Indian tribes. Through this plan the Indian peoples should be given better possibilities to choose their way of co-existence with the larger society. An investigation on the present social situation should be carried out by an independent international team.

IWGIA had earlier (see page 2) received favourable responses from the Nordic governments regarding the financing of field groups, provided official requests were received. On the basis of this information, the Colombian authorities in November 1970 sent a request to the Swedish government, which, however, without consulting other Nordic governments, refused to support the planned project. Considering the present critical situation for the Indians of Colombia, the Swedish government has assumed a heavy responsibility for their future.

As a last resort to get the project started, Lars Persson has taken the initiative to raise money in Sweden through appeals to the general public.

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Reply Letter

Please return this page as soon as possible to: The Secretariat of IWGIA,  
Frederiksholms Kanal 4, A,  
DK 1220 Copenhagen K.  
Denmark.

A check of dollars 3.00, payable to the Secretariat of IWGIA, Copenhagen,  
is enclosed ....., will be sent later .....  
(Scandinavians can use giro nr. 17 99 00).

Name ..... Profession: .....  
Address .....  
.....

The Secretariat should send this Newsletter and the two first numbers of the  
series of IWGIA-documents to:

Name ..... Name .....  
Address ..... Address .....  
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I have documentary evidence of incidents of ..... from the  
following regions .....

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I want to be a personal member of IWGIA: .....  
I will try to start a local work group: ..... (If yes, further informations and  
questions will be sent to you).

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Comments on the problems of organization: