

precise measures of violations of group rights would facilitate responses.

State of the Peoples will also examine major political changes in the world that affect indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. Thus, a 1992 report might have contained detailed analyses of how indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are likely to be affected by the North American Free Trade Agreement or dissolution of the Soviet Union.

State of the Peoples will forcefully point to why the "developed" world, including the U.S. foreign-policy establishment, the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations, and others in positions of power, should care about the world's indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. From oil companies to assistance groups, there is need to reexamine the nature and sources of conflict in a new world.

On a basic level, Cultural Survival and State of the Peoples rest on the premise that conflicts involve nations rather than states. The modern world tolerates extraordinary levels of violence and bloodshed so that states can protect themselves and ostensibly avoid ethnic conflict. Rights are denied, cultures are destroyed, and people are killed by states that refuse to tolerate the kind of pluralism that would enable them to thrive within a wider political framework. In many cases, the victims are singled out solely because they are part of what truly constitutes a "nation"--a group of people defined not by imposed political boundaries but by the human measure of a common culture.

In Cultural Survival Quarterly, Tim Coulter, director of the Indian Law Resource Center, observes, "Many people are coming to realize that the rights we value most, the values we cherish most, are realized only as part of a community. The rights to culture, religious practice, and freedom of expression presuppose the existence of a polity. The right to self-determination has always been a group right: the individual has no clear right to self-determination that can be exercised without a collectivity, a people, a polity."

Such an approach is becoming increasingly central to human-rights efforts, yet only in the late 1970s did the United Nations even recognize group rights on the level of international law. Today, more and more people realize that melting-pot theories don't work in most of the world. Equality under the law doesn't guarantee culture or identity. "Nations" are becoming important as a unit of analysis.

In many ways, State of the Peoples will define issues by redefining common terms in ways that promote, rather than inhibit, positive change. Precise definitions of such terms as nation, self-determination, state, people, and rights can help indicate the existence of needs, conflicts, and threats. Clearly, states are different from nations. Terms like autonomy, freedom, and self-determination need to be precise. They vary according to context and are defined locally.

Just as nations are not equivalent to states, so too the state and its requirements need not be defined in a way that causes so much suffering. Rethinking the relationship between states and nations is a human-rights issue for peoples who suffer at the hands of state power. This is important not just for indigenous peoples but for all of us. More flexible states that recognize the human rights of nations within them offer the prospect of justice and the hope of peace. Conversely, states that trample on the rights of the weak are prone to violate rights on wider scale. Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities are demanding that states respect their rights, and it is in our interest to support their movement and bring the issues they raise to the attention of the world.