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### Ecuador: Opposition to wider trade pact grows

QUITO—Foreign ministers from 34 countries in the Americas gathered here in Ecuador's capital the last week of October for the Seventh Ministerial Summit of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). If implemented as its planners intend on January 1, 2005, the FTAA would link all of the Americas except Cuba in the world's largest "free trade" zone. To counter the planners' agenda in Quito, campesino and indigenous-led social movements from throughout the Americas organized a week of workshops and protests under the slogan "Another America is Possible."

The week's activities culminated in a march by some 15,000 people on the Marriott hotel where the foreign ministers met behind locked doors guarded by a heavy police presence. Despite the marchers' parade permit, riot police blocked the route. Negotiations finally resulted in the ministers agreeing to meet with representatives of the protestors. The representatives presented a letter arguing that "the FTAA can only reinforce social exclusion and deterioration of the environment because it only takes into account the interests of transnational corporations."

Although the protest failed to disrupt the summit as some had hoped, it did reveal a high degree of popular discontent with neoliberal policies, and drove home the point that they can only be implemented under heavy repressive measures.

A particularly contentious issue both for the protesters and the min-

isters was U.S. agricultural subsidies which critics charge would undercut local producers as cheap imported agricultural commodities flood the market. Ecuadorian indigenous leader Blanca Chancoso denounced this policy as the extension of colonization that began 500 years ago. Bolivian peasant leader and congressman Evo Morales condemned the FTAA as a "reproduction of savage capitalism" that would result in "economicide" for small producers.

—Marc Becker

### El Salvador: Law bars public health system privatization

El Salvador's National Assembly voted on November 14 to ratify a decree that prohibits the privatization of the Salvadoran Social Security Institute (ISSS). Salvadoran president Francisco Flores had pushed a plan for letting private providers contract for services in the national health care system. Opponents said the project was a de facto privatization of the system. The vote for the legislation was 59 out of a total of 84, enough to override objections Flores had made to the decree, which originally passed in October. The leftist Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and some right-wing deputies supported the decree, while the 29 deputies from Flores' right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) opposed it.

Thousands of medical workers and others had protested the privatization plans with giant marches and a series of strikes at hospitals and clinics. Dr. Ricardo Alfaro, who heads the ISSS doctors' union, said the current strike would not end until doctors and other ISSS workers fired during the protests were rehired.

—Weekly News Update

### Chile: Mapuche rights conflicts grow; activist killed

In the southern Chilean city of Temuco, a 17-year old Mapuche activist, Edmundo Alex Lemun, died on November 12, five days after being shot in the head during a clash with Carabineros (police) who were trying to forcibly remove a group of Mapuches occupying ancestral indigenous lands claimed by the Mininco lumber company in Angol province, near Ercilla. Lemun's death was the first to arise from long standing land conflicts in the region. An attorney for Lemun's family accused authorities of trying to hide ballistics evidence that proved the Carabineros were responsible



### Jamaica: a culture in resistance

Jamaica of 20, 30 years ago was the proud and magical land of Reggae and Bob Marley. Few countries of any size in the world can rival the global reach of Jamaican narratives of freedom and justice. Jamaican music and ways of thinking have moved people in struggles from continental Africa to the aborigines of New Zealand to Native American peoples of North America.

Yet now it is mostly a vacation destination to resorts that are essentially walled compounds—to protect tourists from the perceived hostility of the locals. Drugs and violence constitute an almost surreal contrast, yet it is these realities that make Jamaica such a fertile ground for lessons in our shared global reality.

Globalization: Life and Debt, March 17-27  
Rhythm of the Movement, June 9-19

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