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NEWSLETTER

EDITORIAL

Peace Plans in Central America

International attention has focused on Central America in recent weeks, as regional leaders make another attempt to bring a resolution to the conflicts through negotiation. So far, none of the proposed plans have succeeded, largely due to the deliberate efforts of the Reagan Administration to undermine them. Regardless of the Administration's activities, however, any plan that sets out to bring lasting peace to the region must recognize certain truths and incorporate certain elements, if it is to succeed.

1) A viable peace plan must recognize the right of all people to self-determination.

In keeping with this tenet, governments that are propped up by external forces or which were fraudulently brought to power should not be further strengthened by the peace plan. The right of people to choose their own government, through democratic processes, must be respected.

2) A true peace plan must call for a complete cut-off of aid to the Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries. The distinction between "humanitarian" and "military" aid is absurd and artificial. Any funds given to the Contras must be recognized for what they are: monies that pay for the killing of innocent civilians. Aid earmarked for "humanitarian" expenses simply frees up funds from private sources for the purchase of lethal, military equipment. Therefore, any comprehensive peace plan must call for an end to all funding to the Contras.

3) A true peace plan must recognize the Nicaraguan government as legitimate and democratic; it must not impose a schedule for elections different from the one outlined

in the Nicaraguan constitution. The 1984 elections, in which Daniel Ortega was elected President of Nicaragua by 67% of the voters, has been described as the fairest in Central America in several decades. The Constitution, recently ratified by the multi-party Parliament that was also elected in 1985, specifies how and when future elections shall be carried out. The will of the Nicaraguan people, as expressed through their elected, representative government must be respected by any serious peace plan.

4) No peace plan must require that the Sandinista government sit down with the Contras. The counterrevolutionaries were first organized and have been maintained by the United States. Without U.S. backing, the Contras would cease to exist altogether.

Failure to gain control over any territory in Nicaragua, despite over 6 years of armed combat and untold millions of dollars in assistance, indicates the lack of popular support for the Contras among the Nicaraguan people. In addition, the Contra military leadership is still largely made up of ex-Somoza National Guardsmen. No proposal should demand that the Nicaraguan government validate the Contras as a legitimate political opposition by requiring negotiations between them.

5) Finally, to bring lasting peace to the region, a plan must not suggest a blanket approach for dealing with rebel groups. The FMLN and the Contras are not equivalent guerrilla movements. The Contras lack popular support whereas the FMLN is able to continue its struggle only because of the mass support it has developed among the peasants of El Salvador. The Contras are the prime example of outside subversion in the region, while the strife in El Salvador represents a truly indigenous, civil war. This distinction is crucial and must be taken into account in the peace process. ■

Interview with Father Alas

Father José Alas is a Salvadorean priest who introduced Liberation Theology to the parish in Suchitoto during the late 1970's. As a result of his efforts to work with the rural poor of El Salvador, he was arrested and tortured by "death squads." He worked with Archbishop Oscar Romero but after Romero's assassination in 1980, Alas was forced into exile.

Today Father Alas works as the Central American Director of the Capp St. Foundation on self-sufficiency projects with Central American refugees. He spoke in Ithaca earlier this year.

What are the effects of the reforms that Duarte is apparently attempting to carry out?

Well, Duarte has been trying to apply the reforms that were enacted before he came to power. I would characterize the people who came to power after the October 1979 coup as liberals. Guillermo Ungo, head of the FDR (the political wing of the FMLN), was one of the men who came to power, along with the president of the Catholic University, Mayorga Quiroz and some other people. And they instituted the three changes in my country: the land reform, the nationalization of trade and of banks.

These three things were key for El Salvador, but the way things were applied it didn't give the results they wanted.

They developed three stages in the program. Phase I would start with land, big estates, more than 700 hectares (about 1500 acres) of land. Phase II would continue on to the middle sized estates (usually coffee growing lands). Lastly, phase III would touch the land in the hands of poor people who rent land from land owners. The government started this reform, developing the first stage and the third, but not the second one. Powerful middle-sized coffee

estates avoided the reform. It will be impossible for Duarte to develop this second stage. Coops were formed by the land reform program. But, as always, these coops didn't receive technical assistance. People didn't understand what was happening. It seemed imposed and they didn't have loans that they needed in time. They were not able to pay debts and produce enough to support themselves. The coops are now in more debt than when they started. The peasants are in a worse situation than before the land reform. Production is lower, especially with cotton and sugar; however, there is more corn and rice than before—which is positive. They also started giving titles, deeds to the land, of those who were renting land. The renters were not organized in order to defend themselves. The landlords started killing them and once again the peasants became afraid and many of them didn't apply for the land.



The banks were nationalized but in a way that no nationalization occurred. This is because some people have bought the shares that belonged to the state, the rest were sold among former owners or among people who were working in the banks at that time. The rich continue to control the banks. Coffee production is down; sugar, cotton and meat

are very low. Even with this Ministry for Foreign Commerce, nationalizing won't encourage greater production because prices are still low.

What about the agrarian reform? Was that a program that was designed to fail, or is it just the fact that it hasn't been properly implemented?

I would say that the main problem with the land reform program is that it was designed by a foreigner ignorant of El Salvador's social situation, Professor Prosterman¹. He was involved in the Vietnam land reform program. The land reform must work with the real beneficiaries of the redistribution, the landless.

So the reforms have not changed the fundamental economic structure of the country?

I would like to mention something that I heard recently--the economy is getting more money from Salvadoreans working in this country and sending the money home than

¹Prosterman currently teaches law at the University of Washington. He worked to design the 1966 land reform law in South Vietnam and was intimately linked to the Philippine agrarian reform. In a 1972 article in *Foreign Policy*, Prosterman proudly referred to the Vietnamese land reform as "probably the most ambitious and progressive non-Communist land reform of the 20th Century." This refers to the plan which was part of the U.S. counter-insurgency program that cost over 30,000 lives. His expenses in El Salvador were paid by AIFLD - the American Institute for Free Labor Development - a known conduit for C.I.A. funding, and by the Land Council, a private organization.

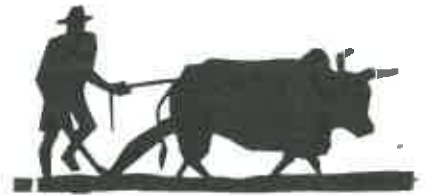
they are actually in US aid. The total probably amounts to one million dollars a year. The money that they are getting from here is equal to the Salvadorean GNP.

That is what I heard from some economists, Salvadorean economists, that the GNP is about 2 million dollars and the funds that come to El Salvador from this country, funds sent by Salvadoreans is equal to the GNP. Suppose that it is less, that is millions of dollars, not peanuts.

What is the situation with the oligarchy? Before the coup in '79 the oligarchy was considered to be in control of the country using the military as its tool. Now with the rise of US influence, has the control of the oligarchy been cut, or has it been weakened. Or, if the US were ever to stop the military aid would the oligarchy immediately come back into control?

Well, if the US cuts the military aid, I would say the next day the oligarchy would be in Miami. US funding keeps El Salvador afloat. I would say that with US policies and with the changes that have been introduced in El Salvador, the oligarchy is weaker, it does not have the same power as before.

That is why they are against Duarte. Through the military they continue to have a lot of power. They control the means of production, they control housing, and they control industry. There are also some large institutions that were not nationalized that belong to them. So they continue having power but, I would say, not at the same level now.



And they no longer are willing to run things, given the incredible mess that the country would be in economically if the US stopped its support. Do you think that they would simply decapitalize and run to Miami?

Since 1970 they have decapitalized the country. They have more money outside El Salvador than inside. This is not new. This decapitalization began before light industry developed in 1950. During the sixties, I was working with the upper classes, with the rich, and I learned that they were putting their money in the Swiss banks and in the US during the sixties.

What kind of following does Duarte have within the PDC, (Christian Democratic Party) and does he have any support outside of it?

Not everyone supports him in the PDC, but this is not new. In the beginning of the seventies, during the PDC congresses for the electoral campaign, there was a real demonstration of force from those opposed to him. They accused Duarte of belonging to the right. And also they accused Rey Prendez and Alan Rodriguez and other members of the Christian Democratic Party. Duarte was opposed to making alliances with political parties that were more towards the left. Duarte has also defended private enterprise such that he seems to belong to the right. The Salvadorean ruling class however, has accused him of being communist. You know that book called *Mutualismo*, the *mutualismo*, meaning something not communist but which has to do with the community. At the same time it is not socialist but something in between. In reality there is nothing but words.



I would say that very few people have any respect for Duarte in El Salvador. He has made alliances, but with political parties that are considered to be with the far right, such as with the PCN, (*The National Conciliation Party*) the party in power from 1960 until 1979.

How much support do the FMLN and the FDR have in the country?

Support for the FMLN and the FDR is really strong, especially among workers, and primarily among peasants. Students and teachers form part of its support as well. This is the only explanation why the FMLN has survived after many years of fighting, and why they have been able to build operations that have produced chaos in the army. Take, for example, the Paraiso Barracks attack in Chalatenango earlier this year. 600 people were killed or wounded. Those barracks were considered by the US as inexpendable, and they were built by US people and were designed by US engineers, Army engineers. The attack was successful because so many peasants offered protection and support for the FMLN.

If you had to say, in terms of percentages, what percentage of the population supports the FMLN and what percentage supports Duarte?

I do not have any idea about that, no one has any idea about that because you sense there are many people who must at least support the FMLN. Those in the UNTS, the National Unity of Salvadorean Workers, support the FMLN.

Has it always been the case that the trade unions have supported the FMLN?

Not all the trade unions, but many of the labor federations support the FMLN and around 90% of the teachers support the FMLN.

There is a lot of talk about a middle ground between Duarte and the FMLN. Does such a group exist and if so, is it an important factor?

A middle group does exist, but I do not know how important they are. I think they do not have enough power. The problem in El Salvador is that the power is concentrated in the hands of the army and the oligarchs. The rest of the people are in the middle, they do not have power. They have the will, but they do not have power. The power is in the hands of the oligarchs, the military and the FMLN.



What would negotiations mean in El Salvador. Is there a possibility of power sharing?

Well, it would mean, first of all, the integration of our people. Everyone who wants to contribute to development or wants to continue living in El Salvador, can stay and work for the country. The FMLN has an interest in power sharing. In the context of power sharing, however, the FMLN sees structural changes as necessary to respond to the needs of people.

Who would they be sharing power with?

The Christian Democrats, perhaps with some members of the PCN, the National Conciliation Party, and smaller political parties, and also with elements in the Salvadorean army. Not all of the members of the Salvadorean army are corrupt or want power for themselves. There are some people, and I know a few, that really would like to see the army playing a different role.

A lot of people here know very little about the Christian Base Communities.

The Christian Base Communities exist in the countryside and in towns and cities, in San Salvador, everywhere. 10 to 20 people form each community. They come together once a week, every fifteen days, or once a month. These meetings develop their spirituality in a way that has ties with reality. That means they pray, read the Bible, and try to understand the message of God concerning human beings. They try to discover the kingdom of God, which is peace, love, freedom and justice. They try to analyze the functioning of their own society about their own reality. They compare that reality to the message of the Bible, and they

ask, "are we responding to that message?". And once they finish with these two studies or reflections, they think, "Well, what is necessary to do?" There is always the need to do something, to answer to their discoveries. Christian Base Communities have their own dynamic since they permit people to think, to develop their faith, to confront their faith with the reality that they are living, and provide a common ground for action.

So, what kind of actions come out of the reflections?

For example, if we speak about landless or resourceless peasants, perhaps they will decide to establish coops or maybe they will decide to take over idle land that doesn't belong to them. Or maybe they will decide to go to the banks, but then they will not receive loans. Or maybe with the discovery of the miracle of Jesus, when he was healing people, they seek to understand health in their village. They may decide to hold clinics and keep aware of health concerns.

So what is the objection of certain sectors of the Catholic Church against this kind of reflection and organizing?

The opposition within some sectors of the Catholic Church sees that some of the problems Christian Base Communities deal with are essentially political. The land reform issue can serve as an example. This is a very important issue in politics and is more political than anything else. The Church objects when people start thinking that they must build their own political organizations. If you speak of land reform or about having control over production within private enterprise or industry, then you touch things where structural change is necessary. Some people believe this represents communism.

So is that the reason why they object?

Yes. They are afraid that the privileges of the status quo will be upset by the people.

Do you see those attitudes changing? Are there any changes, are people coming to accept the Christian Base Communities, or see them as good things, or is the Church pulling away from that? Do you see changes in that?

In some places there is the tendency to change the dynamic of the Christian Base Communities in order to pressure people to pray and pray and remain apathetic. There is a desire to alienate the Christian Base Communities. It has been done. Bishops say the Church is not supposed to be political. Politics, however, become necessary for social change.

Are Christian Base Communities in other places, like Honduras?

Yes. Nicaragua has them.

How does the work that you do developing grassroots projects and grassroots organizations differ in El Salvador versus Nicaragua versus Honduras?

In Nicaragua it is very easy to work because the government supports our work. We can go everywhere and work with groups. In El Salvador, the situation differs. There was always the possibility that members of Orden, a paramilitary organization that was founded in the mid-60's, would denounce us so that the National Guard would come. Or there would be people who were not with Orden or the National Guard, but do not accept change so they would denounce us. In Honduras, the situation appears similar. For 3 or 4 years the CIA has been very active in Honduras. The US embassy in Tegucigalpa is the seventh largest US embassy in terms of staff.

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NEWS BRIEFS

BOLIVIA: Wage Demands and Coca Eradication

Bolivia has experienced a rise in political protests during the last few months over government economic policies and the United States Drug Enforcement Agency's (USDEA) coca eradication plan. 10,000 workers, students and activists, led by the Bolivian Workers' Confederation (COB), began a 15-day hunger strike at the end of March. They demanded an increase in the minimum wage and a resumption of the mining industry, which has offered indemnity bonuses to 2/3 of its 27,000 miners if they quit. The Catholic church stepped in to mediate between the government and the protesters on April 1st. After two weeks, however, the negotiations broke down with the government's refusal to raise the monthly minimum wage (US\$20) more than US\$5. The COB desired a \$40/ month minimum wage. On March 25, 30,000 merchants and students in La Paz protested a 10% tax on goods, services, and incomes as well as a 40% cut in university budgets. In the last week of June, Bolivia's railway workers began a general strike backed by employees of the state's electric company and 15,000 teachers calling for wage raises, renewed pension payments and employers' contributions to social security.

As the fifth week of the miners' strike ended with the May 25 negotiation of a new minimum monthly wage for miners of approximately US\$50 (general minimum wage is \$25), thousands of peasants in coca growing regions blockaded highways in protest of the USDEA sponsored coca eradication plan. The plan calls for elimination of 50,000 out of 65,000 hectares in coca production. Each hectare is exchanged for \$350 in cash and \$1650 in agricultural

inputs to replace the coca with other crops. Peasants criticize this plan for its use of force and for the uncertainty of compensation. In some areas, coca presently serves as the only source of income.

Guillermo Bedregal announced a "modified" version of the coca eradication plan on June 9 that reputedly has the support of 15,000 peasants. The plan states that the eradication will be: "voluntary and gradual"; coca growing will be legal when



used traditionally; judicial and police corruption will be fought; coca-growing regions will have their economic development attended to; and peasants will receive "just" compensation for giving up coca production. Although the modified plan appears more realistic, the government's sincerity remains untested.

Sources: *Latin American Weekly Report*, *Bolivia bulletin*, April 1987, *Andean Focus*, April 1987.



GUATEMALA: U.S. DEA planes spray defoliant in regions of "conflict"

From April 21 until June 23 1987, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency sprayed northern and northwestern forested areas of Guatemala with toxic defoliants at the request of the Cerezo government. Spraying ended following protests by the Guatemalan Congress, environmental groups and several growers' associations. Over one third of Guatemala was affected by the defoliant Glycophosphate, (also known as Round Up), & Malathion. EDB and paraquat were also reportedly sprayed. EDB is a fumigant banned in the U.S. and paraquat is a restricted herbicide which is very toxic to humans and animals in small quantities. The spraying has severely damaged the ecology, ruined crops, and contaminated water. Fourteen people have died and hundreds have been poisoned from contaminated water. Insects, small birds, and hundreds of cattle have reportedly died from poisoned water. Interior Minister Juan Jose Rodil, who supervised the spraying, has



deemed the spraying safe and the U.S. Embassy has stated that the chemicals "are not harmful to people, livestock or the environment," but will "affect almost all of the vegetation."

Guatemalan officials and the DEA have portrayed the spraying as an attempt to rid regions of marijuana and poppy fields and the fruit fly. Guatemala, however, is not a major drug center, although it is a common refueling stop for drug traffickers. On the other hand, counter-insurgency actions by the Guatemalan army against three armed guerrilla organizations in the same areas which were sprayed, suggest that the spraying was used to aid the war. Rodil has mentioned the targeted areas as "conflict zones." In addition, the U.S. airlift of combat troops to northern Quiché earlier this year demonstrates an escalation of the war. Forest fires in May razed 1,500 square kilometers of tropical forest in the Peten. Some press reports linked the cause of the fires to napalm, possibly used in conjunction with the defoliants.

Source: *Report on Guatemala*, July/August



PANAMA: Political Crisis

Panama's present crisis began in June 1987 when the defense forces' chief of staff, Colonel Roberto Díaz Herrera, stepped down and confessed to the media his involvement, along with other leaders, in various criminal actions. Herrera said that the 1984 elections were manipulated by military leaders, that he forced the resignation of President Nicolás Ardito in 1985, that he and others accepted \$12 million from the Shah of Iran in exchange for his refuge in the country, and that General Manuel Antonio Noriega and Lt Col Luis Córdoba are accountable for the death of former minister Hugo Spadafora. Herrera also announced that Arnulfo Arias Madrid should demand the presidency he was denied through fraud.

Public protests erupted in the wake of Herrera's resignation, motivating a government imposed state of emergency banning public meetings, instituting press censorship, and increasing police power to put down riots directed at the government. The extended state of emergency ended on June 29, a few days after the U.S. Senate asked for Noriega's resignation.

Many factors can provide insight into the motives of Herrera's outburst. US interests may have influenced the shakeup with the help of domestic allies in a conspiratorial attempt to block the return of the Panama canal into Panamanian hands. Rivalries between Herrera and Noriega may have also contributed to a plan to undermine Noriega's support. Another theory portrays Herrera as "unstable" because of emotional problems, psychological disorders, or possibly a religious conversion.

In a political offensive, Noriega

arrested Herrera using troops and helicopters in late July. The grouping of opposition parties, business, professionals and some university students under the "Cruzada Civilista" staged a general strike on July 27-28. Noriega responded by organizing a 1,200 car counter-demonstration during the 48 hour strike. The Cruzada Civilista now wants the government to rid itself of Noriega and will support a "transitional" government with Arnulfo Arias Madrid as President.

Within the military, Noriega appears to have retained loyalty of his officers, although a few former military leaders have asked for Noriega's ouster. Some left and labor organizations, notably the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Populares (COPP) and the union Conato, have used to crisis to make new demands of the government. They have asked for the reinstatement of the labor code passed by Omar Torrijos, an end to corruption, a "nationalist" approach to the foreign debt, and state regulation of food supplies.

Source: Latin American Weekly Report

The CUSLAR Rummage Sale is coming! We need your donations to support this, our biggest annual fundraiser. To arrange for drop-off of rummage call CUSLAR at 255-7293.

CUSLAR is offering Spanish classes for all those who wish to participate. They will be Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-7:30 pm beginning the second week of September. To register call CUSLAR at 255-7293.

Father Alas continued

And you have also had some experience with that when you were working with the CIA in this country. What was that?

Well, I was studying at the Jesuit school, Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C. I went to the School of Foreign Affairs in the Latin American Department for a year. I applied for the Masters degree, but I didn't have any interest in one. My interest was to understand how the US employees of the State Department become prepared to work in Latin America. I was completely disappointed with the lack of ideology and absence of a system of ideas. They explore each case in a very pragmatic way, discuss issues as if they are assembling a machine. They do not have the dynamic, for example, of society in Latin America or the politics of Latin America. They do not know what are the forces that contribute in Latin America to work for changes. One of my classmates was a member of the FBI. I had a very close friend, a naturalized US citizen from

Colombia. She studied theology and was with the CIA. And I didn't know why the CIA people need to know theology. They use the theology for their own purposes. That means to watch and control the church, or to create problems inside the church. They know how to do that.



With great sorrow, CUSLAR mourns the tragic death of our friend and ally, Malinda Runyon. Malinda was active in peace and social justice issues in the Ithaca community. We will all miss her.



The Committee on U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a Cornell University-based group which works in Ithaca and the surrounding area to promote greater understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are particularly concerned with the role of the United States in influencing the social, political and economic conditions of the region.

With this issue of the Newsletter, we are trying a new format, and we would welcome your comments and suggestions. The CUSLAR Newsletter provides CUSLAR members and other concerned individuals with the opportunity to present information and analysis on topics relevant to Latin America and the Caribbean. The positions of the authors do not necessarily reflect the positions of CUSLAR as an organization. If you are interested in writing an article for the Newsletter please call the CUSLAR office. We also welcome letters to the editors.

The CUSLAR office is in G-29 Anabel Taylor Hall at Cornell (255-7293). The office is open to the community on weekdays. Weekly meetings are held on Mondays at 5pm in Anabel Taylor.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel on The New York Times Argentina Coverage.

Argentine military officers feel they are victims of an ungrateful society, reports Shirley Christian in The New York Times (June 7). They feel their role in " putting down leftist subversion during the 1970s" is unappreciated- but not by Christian, who quoted unnamed army officers at length, with no comments from human rights activists or victims of the dirty war. Argentine Nobel Peace prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, who was imprisoned and tortured by the military junta, responded to The Times article.

The armed forces returned to their barracks in late 1983, marginalized and defeated by their ignominious venture in the Malvinas Islands and by the rising tide of public opposition to the policies of the national security state. The Argentine people have not forgotten the crimes of the dictatorship: the kidnapping, disappearance and torture of thousands, the destruction of the economy and the slashing of real wages and job security, the export of their "methodologies" to other repressive regimes in Latin America, as well as to the contra mercenaries fighting against the government and people of Nicaragua.

Military officials interviewed by The New York Times "expressed difficulty in accepting that the toll from the counterinsurgency" was as high as 9000. Yet the figure of 9,500 victims (identified by first and last name, date of disappearance, etc.) has been documented by the 1984 Argentine Presidential Commission on the Disappeared [published in *Nunca Mas* (Never Again) by Farrar Straus Giroux.] In fact the Commission indicates that the

actual number of victims was probably much greater; human rights organizations estimate it may be as high as 30,000.

The Times quotes unidentified army officers who maintain that their counterinsurgency campaign was directed only against leftists "engaged in violence." What about the 150 children who disappeared, as the Presidential Commission has documented? Or those who were kidnapped from their homes when they slept at night? The Commission established that the military pursued a premeditated policy of state terrorism aimed at quelling any kind of resistance -- including nonviolent protest -- against the junta's economic and social policies. These findings were confirmed by the courts during the trial of nine leading military officers who were convicted of human rights abuses.

In their statements to the Argentine press, military officials do not deny killing as many people as the Commission reported. On the contrary, they are proud of what they did, and they say they would do it again. Many officers are even opposed to the "due obedience" law, recently pushed through Congress by the Alfonsín government, which stipulates that military personnel can't be held accountable for crimes committed while acting under orders from their superiors. They don't feel that they committed any crimes; they claim they were defending Western Christian civilization and they want the public to thank them for this. "Next they'll want a monument to the picana [an electric cattle prod widely used for torture]," said one federal attorney.

The Times has given the officers a platform to complain that they are so underbudgeted they would not be prepared if "needed for an operation, such as against drug traffickers." This is a strange assertion, given the fact that the Argentine

junta was the principle backer of the cocaine coup in Bolivia in 1980 and the Argentine dictators themselves were involved in drug trafficking.

But the real story missing from the article is that three-and-a-half years after the Argentine military turned the government back to a constitutionally-elected President, the specter of their return to power has provoked an intense civilian outpouring. Hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets and plazas across the country in an unprecedented repudiation of the military uprisings that paralyzed Argentina during Holy Week. Across political and social lines, people mobilized in defense of the constitutional order. Their message was clear: "Never again" to a military dictatorship and its crimes against humanity.

*Reprinted from **Extra**, newsletter of FAIR (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting), vol.1, n.2, July 1987.*

Resources for Peace with Justice

A number of national resources exist to help you keep informed about U.S.-Latin American news and what you can do to help stop U.S. aggression. One such resource is the Coalition for a New Foreign Policy in Washington, D.C. The Coalition provides a hotline you can call to receive up-to-date information about important legislation.

Recently the Coalition's recorded message discussed the current peace initiative in Central America. President Reagan is blocking the effort of Central Americans to find a solution to the Central American wars. Reagan is unwilling to delay asking for further Contra aid even for the proposed 90 day cease-fire. Now that Congress is in recess, Congresspeople should be contacted at home and asked not to support any form of Contra aid (except money for relocation).

Concerning other issues, the State Department Reauthorization will be considered soon. A Walker-type amendment is sure to be proposed in the Senate (one has already passed in the House) to restrict travel to Nicaragua and other Central American countries. The basis for restricting travel would be the President's determination that such travel supports the Nicaraguan military or other "communist" groups. Such restrictions violate basic freedoms and turn a passport into an ideological weapon.

The Coalition also urges everyone to express support for the Moakley-DeConcini bill that would allow Salvadoran and Nicaraguan refugees to remain in the U.S. for two years without fear of deportation.

Peace with justice depends on concerned citizens remaining informed and active. CUSLAR (255-7293) can always be contacted for information, as can the following organization's hotlines:

Coalition for a New Foreign Policy (202-543-0664)--for information on Central America legislation;

Witness for Peace (202-636-4474)--for news on recent Contra attacks;

Nicaragua Network (202-223-6422)--for reports on recent developments in Nicaragua;

NISGUA (202-483-4424)--for up-to-date info on Guatemala.

To learn more about these resources, or other local and national groups, call or stop by the CUSLAR office. ■

Excerpts from the CUSLAR Statement Read at the Non-Debate with the Cornell College Republicans

In the previous issue of the Newsletter there was an update on CUSLAR activities of last spring. One activity was the scheduled debate with the Cornell College Republicans on the issue of contra aid. The Republicans did not show up, apparently reluctant to confront the issue in a truly public forum. The debaters from CUSLAR read their prepared opening statement and then opened the floor to discussion. What follows is excerpts from that statement.

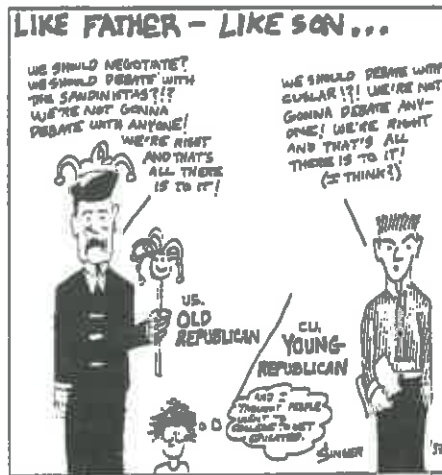
The Reagan administration and its supporters would have us believe that the conflict in Nicaragua is a civil war, that the *contras* are a peasant army born out of massive opposition to the Sandinistas, and that in supporting the *contras* the United States is helping "freedom fighters." In fact, the Reagan administration created the *contras* and is using them to further its own foreign policy objectives, contrary to the desires and best interests of the Nicaraguan majority.

Today, six years later, after millions of dollars have been spent on equipment, training, transport, intelligence gathering, supply-networks, and public relations work,

the *contras* are still what they were at the beginning: a proxy army of the United States. Colonel Enrique Bermudez, main military chief of the *contras*, said in a New York Times story of May 8, 1987 that the very survival of the *contras* depends on continued US funding.

The Administration has tried to portray its sponsorship of the *contras* as a struggle for human rights. However, the most recent Americas Watch report on human rights says, "Violations of the laws of armed conflict by the *contras* cause great suffering to the Nicaraguan people...They still engage in selective but systematic killings of persons they perceive as representing the government, in indiscriminate attacks against civilians, or in disregard for their safety, and in outrages against the personal dignity of prisoners. The *contras* also engage in widespread kidnapping of civilians...a significant number of kidnap victims are children... the escalating brutality of *contra* practices leads Americas Watch to conclude that disregard for the rights of civilians has become a de facto policy of the *contra* forces." The *contras* feel confident that, ultimately, the US will tolerate any barbarity if it is committed in the name of "anti-communism."

To support the *contras* is to condone rape, murder, and torture in Nicaragua, and to deny the democratic rights of a sovereign people to choose their own government and social system. It is also to condone the pursuit of US foreign policy objectives by lying and breaking the law. A complete lack of honesty has characterized the Reagan Administrations policy toward Nicaragua since its very first days in



office. CUSLAR's opposition to the *contras* and to US policy in Nicaragua is not only the result of historical study and the evaluation of available documentary evidence. Unlike the Cornell College Republicans, many CUSLAR members are fluent in Spanish and have traveled, lived and worked in Nicaragua. We have seen the destruction caused by the *contras*, and we know that most people in Nicaragua do not support them. We have proven to ourselves that the propaganda campaign launched against Nicaragua by the Right in this country has little basis in reality. For people who have been to Nicaragua, the *contra* debate is not an ideological video game that we play in our spare time. It is not merely a war of words. It is a personal reality of suffering and injustice which it is our moral responsibility to face and to change. The burden of proof is on those who, against all available evidence, and against a regard for truth and human decency, consider the *contras* worthy of support. In order to support the *contras* the Cornell College Republicans must justify the breaking of US and international law, the disregard for popular opinion in the US, the violent interference in the affairs of a sovereign nation against which we have not declared war, and the arming of murderers and torturers. We in CUSLAR believe that anybody who cares about human rights, democracy, and international law must oppose the unjust and immoral war against Nicaragua. ■



Celebrating The Triumph

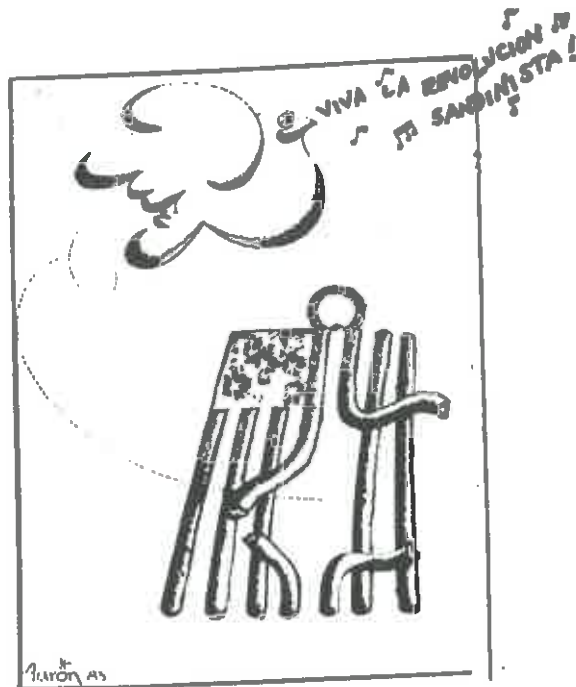
The spirit of independence and self-determination are still strong in Nicaragua. It has been eight years since the triumph of the Sandinista revolution against the U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship. Despite the devastating CIA-Contra war, the economic blockade, the poverty and the misery, the joy of the triumph lives on.

Over a hundred Ithacans celebrated the Anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution on July 18 at the Ithaca Commons. The day-long event, sponsored by CUSLAR and Friends of Nicaragua, involved a video presentation, speeches, literature tables, music by the B-Side and Jeremy Werbin & friends, the release of red and black balloons, and the breaking of pinatas.

The diversity of speakers illustrated the diversity of support that exists for Nicaragua and the Sandinistas: Bruce Tyler (a CUSLAR member), Dale Hathaway (professor at Ithaca College), Bill Gibson (EcoJustice and Sanctuary), Cleveland Meyers (UAW steward at Cornell), Phil Snyder (CRESP), and Carl Feuer (Tompkins County Labor Coalition). Each speaker reminded those at the gathering of Nicaraguan/U.S. history and the importance of supporting Central American independence. Carl Feuer, for example, pointed out the interdependence of workers in the U.S. and in Nicaragua, and the common fight against multinational corporate exploitation.

Anne Posel, an Ithacan who has lived and worked in Nicaragua, stated for a July 18 interview with the local cable TV show *More than the News*, that the Iran/Contra Hearings had allowed lies and distortions about Nicaragua to go unchecked and unquestioned. It is more important than ever for those with more knowledge of the situation to make their voices heard and let the Reaganites know that we will resist.

Several national groups, including the Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America, Witness for Peace, and the Christic Institute, are calling for *Days of Decision* to stop Contra aid. Locally, CUSLAR will be involved in this effort (check the Calendar for more details). The next Congressional vote on Contra aid will be around the end of September. Now is the time to make your voice heard! ■



Repression on the Rise in El Salvador

The attacks and threats of violence directed at the Salvadorean community and anti-intervention activists in Los Angeles parallel growing repression inside El Salvador. In recent months death squads have resurfaced and peaceful protests have been brutally suppressed by government security forces. A survey of recent human rights violations reveals a clear pattern of government action designed to crush popular protest. Recent incidents include:

July 15: Treasury and National Police forces fired shots from the rooftop of the National Bank in downtown San Salvador into a crowd of peaceful demonstrators marching in support of striking workers. At least five people suffered bullet wounds.

July 8: 300 members of STISSS (Social Security Hospital Workers' Union), on strike since June 1, were assaulted by 200 armed agents of the National Police. A dozen people were wounded by gunfire and at least 50 workers were beaten with rifle butts.

June 16: The Maximiliano Martinez Hernandez Brigade, one of El Salvador's most notorious death squads, threatened 14 students and teachers at the University of El Salvador with execution.

June 12-23: Seven civilian men from Chalatenango province were captured and tortured by the Armed Forces. The wives of two of the men were raped. One of the women was pregnant and lost the baby. Soldiers from the Beloso Battalion and the 4th Infantry Brigade took three peasants from their homes in Laguna county, stabbed them in the throat, and left them for dead.

May 31: Julio Portillo, a leader of the

UNTS (National Unity of Salvadorean Workers) and former secretary general of ANDES (Teachers' Union) was shot and injured by members of the National Police at a protest action outside of Mariona Prison.

May 28: A bomb exploded at the San Salvador offices of COMADRES (Committee of Mothers of the Disappeared), seriously injuring two women.

May 15: Antonia Enrique de Paz, a member of CRIPDES (Christian Committee of the Displaced) was run over and killed by a jeep, following her participation in a human rights protest outside the US Embassy. Eyewitnesses described the vehicle as similar to those driven by government security forces.

May 2: The headless body of Antonio Hernandez Martinez, an organizer with ANTA (National Association of Farmworkers) was discovered tossed to the side of a road. Martinez was captured on April 16 by soldiers from the Cuscatlan Battalion.

Sources: New York Times, Washington Post, Associated Press, Salpress-Notisal, UNTS.

Chronology of Recent Death Squad Incidents in Los Angeles

May 1987: An activist, whose name later appears on a death threat list, receives threatening phone calls.

June: Yanira, a 24 year old Salvadorean activist, is the target of threatening phone calls.

Mid-June: Victor Rios, CISPES Southwest Regional Coordinator, receives threatening phone calls, and his car is vandalized.

Late June: Victor Rios receives a letter stating, "For being a communist, what happened to your car will happen to you."

July 7: Torture and rape of Yanira in a Salvadorean death squad-style kidnapping.

July 10: Mercedes Salgado, a Salvadorean activist, finds her car windows smashed, just before going to participate in a press conference denouncing the kidnapping/torture of Yanira.

July 11: A refugee's apartment is ransacked.

July 12: Suspicious looking cars park in front of Casa El Salvador's office, and monitor the movement of people going in and out.

July 13: Threatening phone calls are made to Comité El Salvador's office.

July 13-18: A refugee receives threatening phone calls and is denounced "for being a communist."

July 15: Father Luis Olivares receives a death threat signed E.M. 1. The initials are believed to stand for esquadron de la muerte (death squad), and are similar to messages received by priests in El Salvador prior to their execution by death squads.

July 15: A friend of the refugee whose apartment was broken into on July 15 is shot and wounded in the leg outside the ransacked home.

July 18: A local solidarity event in Los Angeles receives a bomb threat.

July 17: A Guatemalan woman is forced into a car by Salvadorean men, and warned to stay away from Salvadorean activists.

July 20: The CISPES Regional Office receives a death threat in the mail. ■

INHERITANCE

In a country where gunfire
drums a rhythm as constant
as the heartbeat of the red soil
peace is found only in the sleep
of a dark-haired seven-year-old
who has not yet learned
to wield an M-16.

While he lies on a reed mat
his grandmother sets down her chopping
knife then dries her hands
soft and wrinkled like fine
brown leather.

She steps out of the kitchen
into the humid mid-afternoon air
and silent now, leans against the open
door, shoulders back
neck twisted to peer down the alley
her tired fingers clutch the corners
of her flour-stained apron
to her breast.

Her dark brown eyes
the color of espresso beans
follow the lumbering progress
of a cold green tank
up the rutted street. It is before her now
and the corners of her mouth
curl into a sneer.

She drops her apron
and hurls
a grenade into the center of the street
before the olive drab monster
then throws herself
through the kitchen door
and under the knotted pine table.

Her grandson
will inherit
her explosives
and her hunger.



Nancy Sarah Schoellkopf

*the author lives in Sacramento
where she does progressive
peace work*

Upcoming CUSLAR Films

*Chile: Hasta Cuando? **

Australian filmmaker David Bradbury entered Chile on the pretext of making a documentary on the country's music and religious festivals. The film he ended up with told quite a different story - a story of a country racked with political repression and torture.

The film looks back to the violence of 1973 in which the country's military, backed by the United States, overthrew the government of Salvador Allende, replacing it with the present dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet. It is the Pinochet government's harsh, repressive measures that are recorded in this searing documentary. The film crew risked their lives to capture this story of indiscriminate arrests, military intimidation, brutal murders, and disappearances, all taking place while Chile's elite enjoys the good life.

Although David Bradbury has filmed in Central America (*Nicaragua :: No Pasaran*) and Cambodia (*Public Enemy Number One*) he found his time in Chile the most terrifying. This film, part of which was smuggled out by a nun, will show the world that the situation in Chile is as explosive as in South Africa or Nicaragua. As the title asks, *Chile, When Will It End?*

*Cuba - In the Shadow of Doubt **

The uneasy relationship between the United States and Cuba nearly plunged the world into nuclear war almost 25 years ago. Cuba is only 90 miles away from the U. S., yet here little is known about the origins of its present revolutionary government and about life in Cuba today.

* Speakers will follow the films.

Filmed on location at La Plata, Castro's former guerrilla headquarters - the first time any foreign film crew has been permitted there - the documentary examines the origins of Castro's revolution, and its ultimate successes and failures. It places current U.S.-Cuban relations within the context of history, dating back to the Spanish-American War in 1898. The war gave Cuba independence but left it economically dependent on America as a market for its principal export, sugar.

The documentary goes on to paint a canvas of everyday Cuban life. We hear from Cuban artists, State Department officials, exiled writers, and Castro himself.

In its coverage of a complex subject, this film is neither a rationale for Communist Cuba nor a political tool for exiles.

*And That is Why the State is to Blame **

A film by Frank Diamand and Jan van der Putten

And That is Why the State is to Blame is a film about Marianella Garcia Villas, president of the Human Rights Commission of El Salvador, who was killed by the Salvadoran army on May 14, 1983. She had returned in secret to conduct an investigation into the use of chemical weapons and indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population. The film describes Marianella's heroic and unceasing fight against injustice and brutality in her country. Through interviews with her family, friends and colleagues, the film reveals a portrait of a untiring and dedicated woman; a lawyer from an affluent family, she was one of the few willing to defend political prisoners.

And That is Why the State is to Blame is a double portrait of the state of human rights in El Salvador and of the woman who sacrificed her life in defense of those rights.

Calendar

- September 3
8pm CUSLAR Film Series. Chile: Hasta Cuando. Anabel Taylor Auditorium. Free.
- September 7-12 Chile Week. Activities downtown and on-campus marking the 14th anniversary of the CIA-backed overthrow of President Salvador Allende will culminate in a noontime vigil on Friday the 11th on the Commons.
- September 15
8 pm Sukay Concert. Traditional Music from the Andes. Sponsored by the Latin American Studies Program and the Center for Creative and Performing Arts. Barnes Hall Auditorium. Free.
- September 17
8 pm CUSLAR Film Series. Cuba: Beyond the Shadow of a Doubt. Anabel Taylor Auditorium. Free.
- September 21
5 pm CUSLAR Introductory meeting. Commons Coffeehouse, Anabel Taylor Hall. People interested in becoming active members of CUSLAR are encouraged to attend this meeting.
- October 2-3
9 am CUSLAR Annual Rummage Sale. Downtown location to be determined. Call CUSLAR for details.
- October 8
8 pm CUSLAR Film Series. And That Is Why the State Is To Blame. Anabel Taylor Auditorium. Free.
- October 22
8 pm CUSLAR Film Series. Mountain Music of Peru and The Spirit Possession of Alejandro Mamani. Anabel Taylor Auditorium. Free.
- October 29 John Linder will be speaking about the life, work and death of his brother, Ben, in Nicaragua. Time and place to be arranged.
- November 8 & 9 Guatemalan Student Tour. Students from Guatemala will speak about the human rights and political situation in their country.

CRESP
Anabel Taylor Hall
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853

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