

Feb 85

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

A Project of CRESP

Gay and Lesbian Liberation in Mexico

"It's a matter of life and death for the movement to receive outside support. Before we came out, no one knew about us. Now they are so shocked they cannot articulate a response. As soon as they can see our weaknesses they are going to let us have it. If there is more organized harrasment and we have no outside aid, we are lost. We need support. I must stress this... We think that gay rights in our country are not enough because they can be easily won. There are no specific laws that attack us. We think that our condition in Mexico is not due to politics but to machismo. We will not be free until all are free."

Juan Jacobo Hernandez, a founder of the Frente de Liberacion Homosexual (FLH) and the Frente Homosexual de Accion Revolucionario (FHAR). Quoted in Gay Community News (Boston) Sept. 15, 1979.

Gay and lesbian liberation has become a world-wide movement in the last fifteen years. Today, the gay

[continued on page 2]

Movie Review : Improper Conduct

Improper Conduct breaks new ground on the international gay and lesbian movement, but it is an uneven film, awkwardly self-righteous and ideologically muddled. In this feature-length work, director Nestor Almendros has assembled a collage of interviews-- the testimony of artists, intellectuals, and gay men-- which portray a cruel, systematic repression of homosexuals in revolutionary Cuba. I think any

[continued on page 6]



—Crisólida

and lesbian community of Mexico is among the most advanced in the world in its degree of organization against oppression. Several gay and lesbian organizations have successfully moved the Mexican Left to take a more comprehensive vision of liberation than the purely economic. At the same time, they have maintained a commitment to broader social change.

ORIGINS OF THE MOVEMENT

The first Mexican gay organization -- the Frente de Liberacion Homosexual (FLH) -- was organized in 1971 in Mexico City. The FLH had to remain underground because of the high level of state repression against anyone who challenged the existing order. In 1968, during the Olympic Games, government troops had killed over 500 people at Tlatelolco Plaza demonstrating against political repression. In 1971, paramilitary forces killed another one hundred people at a peaceful protest march.

In 1978, in an atmosphere of less blatant repression, a "new push forward by the left and the development of a vigorous women's movement" (Fernbach), FLH members formed an above-ground organization, the Frente Homosexual de Accion Revolucionario (FHAR). The philosophy of the group was fundamentally anti-capitalist. It sought the "integration of homosexuality into a future socialist society rather than into the present Mexican social formation." (Fernbach) FHAR made its first public appearance at a march in memory of the victims of the 1968 massacre and in support of the Cuban revolution.

2 The Mexican police responded with a prolonged attack on the

community including raids on gay bars, harassment, heavy and illegal fines, and the extortion of bribes. The FHAR organized resistance. They picketed police stations and informed gays of their rights under the law, and what the maximum legal fines were. The gay community's resistance became widespread and spontaneous. In June, 1979, they celebrated their success with the first Mexican Gay Pride march.

GRUPO LAMBDA

Several other gay and lesbian organizations were formed in the late 1970's. Among the most prominent were Oikabeth, a lesbian socialist group, Grupo Lambda de Liberacion Homosexual, a mixed gay and lesbian organization, and several gay Christian groups. Grupo Lambda has since emerged as the most prominent and active group. (See the following article in this issue) Its leaders have generally been members of the Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores (PRT) (Revolutionary Workers Party), which is the Mexican Fourth International / Trotskyist party.

The FHAR and Grupo Lambda have worked together on most issues, although they have some disagreements in their social analyses. Both have been strongly committed to wide social change in the economic as well as the gender system. Their membership is mostly from the urban working class. Upper-class gays remain unorganized.

The main disagreement between the two groups has been over the political role of 'drag' (men dressing as women). To Lambda, drag is considered to be anti-woman and a

symptom of the gender system to be overcome. To FHAR, drag is a revolutionary challenge to gender oppression, and its suppression a reactionary concession to the standards of the 'heterosexual dictatorship'. Drag has historically been the traditional expression of gay men in Mexico as well as in the United States until the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion. * Another difference between the groups is that Lambda has been more active in maintaining a male-female balance than FHAR.

The FHAR formally dissolved itself in 1981 because of problems in internal organization. The core of experienced organizers who were unclothed enough to act as public spokespersons was too small to carry on the tasks of educating the public and organizing social events while at the same time resisting repression. Nevertheless, collectives originating from the FHAR continue to function, and conflict between these and Lambda still complicates the planning of annual Gay Pride marches.

PARTICIPATION IN 1982 ELECTIONS

In 1982, for the first time in Latin American history, gay and lesbian candidates openly ran for office in national elections. Six activists from Oikabeth, Lambda, and FHAR campaigned as PRT candidates for deputy posts in the Mexican national assembly. The PRT candidate for the presidency, Rosario Ibarra, was the first woman ever to run for President of Mexico. The gay and lesbian community was treated for the first time as a political constituency. **

The other left coalition in the 1982 election, the Mexican United Socialist Party (PSUM) sent speakers to gay rallies. The coalition's principle member, the Mexican Communist Party (PCM), had endorsed gay rights after FHAR lobbied it. PCM was the first Communist Party ever to endorse gay rights. However, the PSUM coalition did not itself endorse the cause or include any openly gay candidates.

The Committee of Lesbians and Homosexuals in Support of Rosario Ibarra (CLHARI) began its campaign with a rally on March 20. Fifty armed men attacked the rally and injured at least ten people. The following week, CLHARI organized a second rally to protest the armed attack and the indifference shown by police. The publicity around these events brought both visibility to the campaign and support from progressive sectors.

MORAL RENOVATION

Inevitably, given the entrenchment and the corruption of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), their candidate for the presidency, Miguel de la Madrid, won the election. The most that the progressive forces could do was to make a strong showing in the election so as to challenge the PRI's national hegemony.

President de la Madrid promised an administration of 'Renovacion Moral'. He claimed that this "moral renovation" was against government corruption, but it became instead a euphemism for a wave of repression against the marginal elements of society. Attacks were

directed at "minorities, prostitutes, homosexuals, and unemployed youths as scapegoats in the face of the grave economic situation that wracks the country. We know that in periods of sharp crisis the state always invokes social morality in order to maintain control over the population..." (John Kyper in GCN, Vol. 11, No. 18). In Guadalajara, the "moral renovation" was especially brutal. Gay organizations there, as well as in Mexico City and Tijuana protested the police attacks. They sought letters of support from gays and straights throughout the world to be sent to Mexican government officials.

The Mexican government responded positively to the gay movement and the international solidarity it received. The following letter appeared in the Boston Gay Community News on June 22, 1984:

Dear GCN,

We do really appreciate your wonderful cooperation in publishing my letter, and I am sure that we will get some letters to support our 41,000 signatures against police repression and extortion. By the way, I have good news for you. After going in a parade to the "Delegacion Cuantemoch" and later to the "Palacio Legislativo" (where the Senators and the Deputies chambers are), and after many publications in newspapers and on the radio, we finally got it. Yes!!! The police have stopped the razzias (raids) since March 29, and the police chief is requested to appear at the Deputies Chamber to explain the why of the raids and police extortion. Hard to believe, but true, we got it. So no more fear of walking

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night time or going to bars, well at least for the time being...."

Jorge A. of Nueva Batalla,
Mexico DF, Mexico.

CONCLUSION

Grupo Lambda is among the most active and progressive gay and lesbian organizations in the world. Since the impetus for gay organizing requires the context of a city large enough to allow social space outside of the family and church, it is no coincidence that the group formed in Mexico City. Recently it has appeared in most of the provincial cities. Elsewhere in Latin America Brazil has the largest, most overt gay subculture in the region and has several gay organizations which have been struggling in the context of a military dictatorship. In Argentina, gay organizations have emerged after the fierce repression of a dictatorship which considered homosexuality a form of terrorism. Groups also exist in Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. In Cuba, the institutionalized homophobia of the revolution still precludes the possibility of gays organizing in defense of their dignity and rights. In Nicaragua, there seems to be no overt gay subculture from which a movement can be organized. However, the FSLN has fortunately resisted contributing to the social repression of gays.

John Hollister

* A June 1969 police raid on a gay bar in Greenwich Village encountered successful resistance followed by three days of rioting. This "Stone-

Wall Rebellion" marks a watershed in gay rights in the U.S. and is considered the start of the modern gay liberation movement.

** This development was paralleled in Brazil in 1983, when the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) and the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB) called for the abolition of anti-gay legislation, and sought the support of the gay community.

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In March, CUSLAR will sponsor a study group on the Gay and Lesbian Experience in Latin America. I would appreciate any information, articles, anecdotes, insights or experiences that Newsletter readers may have on this topic, especially concerning Nicaragua.

The following statement by Grupo Lambda appeared in Sin Fronteras, A Gay Latino Journal, No. 1, Summer 1984, Denver.

Grupo Lambda

In México and in the whole world, hundreds of thousands of lesbians and gay men have decided to organize ourselves under the flag of our sexual preference. We have decided to say Enough to the lies, insults, and abuse that a classist and sexist society has imposed. At the same time, we plan to oppose the violence and discrimination that we experience.

El Grupo Lambda de Liberación Homosexual, is a organization that has fundamental objectives: One, we struggle against all types of oppression and repression that all of us suffer for the simple act of loving the same sex; Two, we counter the lies about gay men and lesbians that heterosexist society has traditionally spread.

What We Are Struggling For

1. To exercise our rights as Mexican citizens as established in the Mexican Constitution.
2. To mobilize against the anti-constitutional police persecution that really means extortion; blackmail, traps, and allanamientos domiciliarios, etc.
3. We propose to eradicate the male supremacist violence that is exercised against us everywhere we are.
4. We re-vindicate the right to full employment and we oppose all types of discrimination at the workplace. In other words, we defend our right to express our sexual preference and affections in all parts of society, that is to say, we demand the right to love, kiss, caress and hug freely.

On the other hand we do not hold illusions that the social system, governed by bourgeois men, will respond to the gay/lesbian struggle. While the enemies govern, none of our gains will be safe against their counter-attacks. Full rights for lesbians and gay men will be realized only with a fundamental change in society.

lesbian or gay man will find the incidents these Cubans recount chillingly convincing, because the logic that encourages prejudice against homosexuals in Cuba is all too familiar to gays and lesbians everywhere.

If anything, the force of anger one would expect from a people subjected to forced labor camps, public confessions, mental institutions, coordinated state censure and exile, is surprisingly understated. The quiet civility, even politely resigned tone of most of these interviews contrasts jarringly with the filmmaker's aggressive, cliché condemnation of the Cuban revolution. As a result, the film seems disjointed.

The radical distrust and repudiation of revolutionary Cuba's social agenda which is shared by many gays seems, from my lesbian perspective, a natural outcome of the treatment homosexuals have received since 1959. The revolution has promoted greater economic social justice; the filmmakers do not give adequate credit to those accomplishments. But one must question the legitimacy of a government which condemns its homosexual citizens in a travesty of justice, and ask why these events took place. This is the question the film, except in a cursory way, does not ask. Gays and lesbians can fill in the answer on reflex. It does not surprise me that some heterosexual people found the scourging of Castro and the revolution to be imperialist inspired propaganda, or just gay hyperbole. After all, wasn't the persecution of homosexuals only a mistake?

Several people in the film speak of straight men's difficulty in accepting gay men, based on widely divergent images of masculinity. A few artists speak to the threat a one-party, one line government perceives from people who do not fit the rote socialist model of an intellectual or cultural revolutionary. These two observations begin to address the underlying problem, but they are anecdotal comments which cannot create a unifying theme for the movie, which remains primarily a recounting of individual experiences.

Let me take two points beyond their presentation in the movie: First, heterosexual men are threatened by the sexuality of gay men because the ideology of male supremacy does not allow any man to act "like a woman." Contempt of women sets the foundation of queer-hatred. In a Cuban state where abortion is legally free on request, but in practice available only to minors or women with more than three children; where "sexual harassment is still prevalent and complaint procedures are complex and slow, discouraging women from availing themselves of their rights of grievance;" ["Cuba", *Sisterhood is Global*, Robin Morgan, ed., (Anchor Books, 1984) p.167.] where the male leadership has easy access to "call girls;" where lesbianism until 1978 was considered a mental illness, but now is only "a threat to public morality punishable by four years imprisonment (a threat which cautions all women to stay in line); in this kind of Cuban society it is clear that revolutionary demands to address "women's issues" are at the discretion of men, according to their social/economic priorities, and not by women's right. Heterosexual male privilege fuels the moral fires of gay and lesbian repression: neither gay men nor lesbians accept our heterosexuality-determined fates.

Secondly, homosexuality challenges a mono-cultural vision of Cuba. Gay and lesbian cultures share an outcast position with religious and racial/cultural minorities. Jehova's Witnesses were herded with gay men into the forced labor camps of the 1960s. Artists and intellectuals, alongside gays and lesbians, were suspect, persecuted, and exiled. Like the somewhat improved status of women, cultural diversity exists at the discretion of the dominant Cuban culture in power, and not by right.

The anti-Castro, anti-socialist sentiment of *Improper Conduct* makes sense in light of the sexual and cultural imperialism that are prevalent in the Cuban leadership and enforced by the majority-culture members in the neighborhood CDEs (Comites de Defensa de la Revolucion) who keep track of every Cuban's habits. The repression of homosexuals is not a "mistake." It is the logical consequence of a

government that is protective of male domination and a hierarchical vision of the new society. Gays and lesbians are easy targets in Cuba, but I expect we will not be the exclusive target, as government priorities shift over the years. A socialist government which only protects the rights of the majority race and culture is a dangerous one: surely this is reason enough to realize that a revolution which overthrows economic imperialism is only one small piece of the anti-imperialist struggle.

It is unclear whether the director shares this way of thinking, or whether he is representing a narrower political base that equates socialism with totalitarianism. The traditional western culture of the US and Europe are not criticized. They are, in fact, implicitly presented as the liberating alternative to which many homosexuals have fled, without any mention of the multiple abuses originating in these homes of global imperialism. The civil rights of homosexuals are somewhat better protected in the U.S. (if only because the state has not, yet, organized itself to systematically disappear us) but is that all gay men are looking for? Most, but not all, of the men speaking in the film were middle class or part of the intelligentsia, and I was acutely aware during the entire film that it was about men. I think it is fair to ask whether gay men, caught in their own version of male supremacy, without a feminist and anti-racist, culturally anti-oppressive overview, are going to be concerned with anyone's oppression but their own. Some of the confused impact of the film may be due to this shortened perspective.

Improper Conduct addresses a broader concept of traditional male dominance aggression roles when the film links a global Cuban military presence to the need of the heterosexual Cuban leadership to prove its manhood. But this was a fleeting mention, unsupported by any commentary that would make the analogy something more than gratuitous sniping. Cuts of Fidel Castro, carrying on in stereotypical straight male posturing, talking as the father instructor to laudatory audiences, seem, without a systematic discussion of gender oppression, to caricature and belittle him for the sake of an easy sarcastic attack. Not that it is

undeserved. But isolated as the examples are, they grind a personal axe without advancing the understanding of a more radical, anti-sexist, multicultural struggle.

Perhaps the most specious account in the film, and, to me, the most unreflective exercise of anti-socialist bitterness, is the description by a gay man of his arrival in the U.S. during the Mariel boatlift. For days he and his companions had been refugees in the Peruvian embassy in Cuba, surrounded by hostile crowds and police. As he neared the U.S. shore, he saw cordons of police and was afraid-- until he realized the police were there "to protect us."

His remark went by without comment, leaving those of us who remember to fill in the rest of the story --the revision of U.S. authorities when they realized who many of the Marielites were; how "lesbians and faggots" were kept in detention until they could find "sponsors", and how only the lesbian and gay communities mobilized to accept these people who nobody else wanted.

Improper Conduct is a film worth seeing for no other reason that it is one of the very few films extant about gay and lesbian people in socialist countries. There are serious shortcomings, but the detailed description of the Cuban crusade against homosexuals is an invaluable first step towards documenting our experiences as an unwelcome culture under revolutionary-socialist governments.

If nothing else, I expect straight people to come away horrified, as I was, that this is by no means an experience exclusive to Cuban homosexuals. The film accuses specific leaders in the socialist countries-- such as Bulgaria, Cuba, and China-- of conducting international discussions on the "homosexual problem." Their final solutions range from forced labour camps, to prison, to systematic murder. How many heterosexuals remember that thousands of gays and lesbians, wearing pink triangles, were killed in the Nazi death camps? Is it any wonder that when we participate in anti-imperialist work, it is with a deep ambivalence towards revolutionary societies?

Improper Conduct is only a first attempt. Much more conscious and politicized efforts may

someday bridge the gap between an economic socialism and a socialism dedicated to genuine freedom from sexual, racial, and cultural oppression. Lesbians and gay men are carefully watching the situation developing in Nicaragua between the Mosquito Indians and the Sandinistas, waiting to see if there is room in the Sandinista political agenda for a respect of diversity in Nicaraguan socialism. If there is, it will bring a

hope of a pluralistic socialist society in the future for those of us who refuse to be assimilated into heterosexual culture. I would like to think that the socialist experience of gays and lesbians can eventually become a faded nightmare, and that Nicaragua can be a new beginning.

by R.B.

Report From Peru

In this article, a friend of CUS-IAR who is currently living in Peru shares her impressions of the current situation and the upcoming elections.

The central themes of the past year in Peru have been the external debt, galloping inflation, governmental corruption and spreading violence. These themes are interrelated both in their overall development and in the specific cases which emerge in the newspapers every day.

The central theme of this year is the coming elections, which will take place on April 14. Hope that the elections will improve economic and social conditions is widespread.

THE ECONOMY

Peru's external debt is approximately 13,500 million dollars. Currently six months behind in interest payments, the nation owes more than 200 million dollars in interest alone. Richard Webb, president of the Central Bank, is distinguished by being the only government official who frankly admits that Peru has no hope of keeping up with interest payments, much less ever touching the debt itself.



Inflation is projected to increase from 105% in 1984 to about 200% in 1985. The effect on the buying power of wages and salaries is brutal in both the public and private sectors. Despite laws passed to adjust contracts according to inflation, real income continues to drop steadily. The large public sector is particularly inflexible, and a traditionally middle-class job in the public sector can no longer support a small family at even a modest standard of living.

The informal sector is vast, and mainly consists of small commerce and

[continued on page 13]

Brazil's 686 electors chose a new president January 15. Tancredo Neves, 74, replaced General Joao Figueredo and is Brazil's first civilian president in nearly 21 years.

Neves defeated Paulo Salim Maluf of the Democratic Social Party, who was backed by the military. Two months before, when Neves promised not to order reprisals against military leaders, the military ceased its effort to create election procedures favoring Maluf. [NYTimes 10 Dec 84]

Globo, the world's 4th largest commercial TV network (the U.S. has the top 3), started to back Neves aggressively in mid-1984. With help from Time, Inc., Globo reaches 93 percent of Brazilians. [NYTimes 14 Dec 84]

Mexico's elections must come off "in a peaceful climate and with strict adherence to legality," president Miguel de la Madrid told the 31 state governors January 8. His party, the Pri (the Institutional Revolutionary party) faces a serious challenge in the July elections. The party has not lost a presidential or state election in 55 years, but the Pan (the National Action party), supported by pro-US businessmen, may win some races this time.

And the Pan's leaders are predicting riots if they don't win some. de la Madrid's demand for clean, non-violent elections followed street protests in Coahuila about election-rigging in that northern state. The protesters stripped one mayor-elect naked and threw another into an open sewer. In the border town of Piedras Negras, pro-Pan forces fought the police for six hours after the Pri overturned an apparent Pan victory. The battle, telecast to Mexico and the U.S. by a Texan crew, resulted in one death and the burning of the town hall. [(London) Economist 12 Jan 85]

Under the military crush of General Oscar Mejia Victores and his predecessors the

LATIN AMERICAN ELECTIONS

political murder rate in Guatemala has fallen from 350 per month three years ago to 58-60 today, and the (London) Economist does not expect the weakened guerrillas of the left or the right-wing forces to impede the elections. In February Victores is due to approve a constitution drafted in December by an 88-member group elected last July. Then the group plans to write election laws and to restore habeas corpus. Since no one is expected to win a majority, a runoff is likely in August. The smart money's on Vinicio Carpio, a Christian Democrat who has support from 3 other, smaller parties (the Economist says Carpio is "firmly in the political center"). If all this comes off, Guatemala could inaugurate a president September 15, ending 14 years of military rule.

El Salvador plans elections March 17 for mayors and for a new Legislative Assembly. Bolivia may vote for a new congress and president June 16. If Peru carries through its two rounds of elections starting April 14, it will be the first time in 42 years that one civilian govt has succeeded another. Guatemala is scheduled to elect a civilian government in June or July. Mexico, whose ruling party faces its first serious challenge in 55 yrs, chooses 7 state governors and a new congress July 7. Honduran elections for president and congress are slated for November 24. Argentina plans to elect a new House late this year. [USJournal 11 Jan 85]

Churches, Immigrants,

three themes in the recent press

October 1984

Congress says the Contras (Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries) are using \$18m from Argentina and \$4m from Israel. Both govts deny it. Private sources, including the Conservative Caucus, Soldier of Fortune magazine, the VFW, and the Unification Church (Moonies), have sent about \$20m more. The CIA says it's tapped private sources since Congress cut off govt funds. [MesoAmerica Oct 84]

Thursday 6 December 1984

The Supreme Court agreed to hear a case that will clarify the legal status of Haitian refugees. If they are declared "illegal aliens," they will be protected under the Constitution, but if the court upholds the ruling of a Federal Appeals panel from earlier this yr, they will remain "excludable aliens," subject to detention without hearings. [NYTimes 9 Dec]

Saturday 8 December 1984

Talks in Manzanillo, Mexico between the US and Nicaragua on the Contadora draft treaty are in deadlock, said a foreign ministry official in Managua. The draft, approved by Nicaragua in Sept, includes a call for removal of foreign military advisors from the region. About the US's counterplan the official said, "They wanted us to remove Cuban and Soviet advisors in three stages and to accept the Contras into the political process here without offering anything in return. There wasn't much else for us to talk about after hearing that. They wanted political capitulation." [NYT 9 Dec]

Sunday 9 December 1984

Ossining, NY -- The Maryknolls rejected Vatican criticisms of their political activism and of their theology. In Sept the Vatican praised the order's aim of helping the poor as it denounced the "deviations" of liberation theology, esp. its calls to take seriously the ideas of class warfare and atheism. [NYT 10

Dec]. Nicaragua's foreign minister, Miguel d'Escoto Brockman, is a Maryknoll priest.

Monday 10 December 1984

Washington -- Cuban and US State Dept negotiators agreed in principle on terms for sending 2,500 convicts and psychiatric patients back to Cuba and on resuming regular immigration. But nearly 1,600 of those who face deportation (all of whom were among the 125,000 Marielitos arriving in Florida in 1980) have filed suit in Atlanta to challenge their "excludable" status. If they win, the Justice Dept may try to block their expulsion. A White House source commented that Justice is being "very legalistic" about this. [NYTimes 11 Dec]

Johannes Gerhartz, the Jesuit "pope," expelled Fernando Cardenal from the order for refusing to resign as Nicaragua's education minister. Several months ago Pope John Paul II told Cardenal and 3 other priests to resign from the cabinet. Although the Pope's ban against holding public office applies to all priests and nuns, Cardenal is the only Jesuit of the 4, and only he was dismissed from his order. The local Archbishop may discipline the others, according to a Western diplomat.

Cardenal said that the Nicaraguan Bishops Conference had campaigned for their dismissal, adding that the bishops were openly against the interests of the poor in Nicaragua. He will stay in the cabinet. [NYTimes 11 Dec]

Wealthy US citizens and groups have raised \$1/2m per month in material aid to the Contras since Congress cut off funds, says retired Gen. John K. Singlaub, pres of the World Anti-Communist League. [Washington Post 10 Dec 84]

Tuesday 8 January 1985

Pres-elect Ortega is re-organizing the Nicaraguan cabinet to place more emphasis on defense. Most of the ministers will stay, including the 4 priests. [WSJournal 9 Jan 85]

Contras

Wednesday 9 January 1985

Daniel Ortega Saavedra became Nicaragua's first president since the revolution in 1979. He begins a 6-yr term today. So do 61 other Sandinistas in the 96-member National Assembly. [WSJournal 10 Jan 85]

Thursday 10 January 1985

Nicaragua may expect negotiations if Congress refuses to restore funds to the Contras (the vote could come anytime after 28 Feb), but Craig Johnstone, deputy assistant sec'y of state for Central America, says: "I think the prospects for negotiations will go out the window if there isn't some element of pressure on the Sandinistas." [WSJournal 11 Jan 85]

Sunday 13 January 1985

3 of the govts most dependent on US aid have been taking over support of the Contras. Sources in the Administration and Congress say that El Salvador now bases and supports the Contras' small air force, that Honduras supplies "tons" of ammunition, and that Israel gives advice and has sent Soviet arms captured in its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Such aid is not new -- the Contras got 6000 Belgian automatic rifles from Honduras in 1982-3 -- but the sources said that aid from US allies has grown since Congress held up funds to the CIA last yr.

Official Administration sources say that no US aid to the 3 countries is funneled to the Contras and that anyway the Soviets and the Eastern Bloc sent the Sandinistas \$100m, mostly in arms, in 1983. [NYT 13 Jan 85]

Wednesday 16 January 1985

"A U. S. judge ordered 34 Cuban refugees freed from the Atlanta federal prison by Tuesday. They had been cleared for release to sponsoring halfway houses. Meanwhile, a federal appeals court temporarily set aside part of the judge's earlier ruling that had effectively blocked deportation of 2,746 [Cuban] refugees..." [WSJournal 17 Jan 85]

Thursday 17 January 1985

Nicaragua used Soviet-made T-55 tanks for the 1st time to attack Contra saboteurs of the coffee harvest in Madriz, a northern province. The

govt announced the offensive 24 Jan, saying that 71 Contras have been killed in the campaign, which continues. [WSJ 25 Jan 85]

Thursday 24 January 1985

Despite a US boycott, the World Court will hear Managua's case charging the US with aggression (mining harbors) and with trying to topple the govt (backing the Contras). Nicaragua must present its case in writing by 30 Apr; the US has till 31 May to respond. [WSJ 25 Jan]

Tuesday 29 January 1985

Sen. Alan Simpson (R-WY) and Rep. Romano Mazzoli (D-KY) will submit a new version of their immigration bill from last yr. The old bill was pushed off the end of the calendar by lawmakers who faced re-election. It called for criminal penalties for hiring undocumented workers and for extended amnesty to immigrants who arrived in the US illegally some yrs ago. [Miami Herald 29 Jan 85]

January and February 1985

The Pope spent 12 days in Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Trinidad, telling the govts to take care of the poor and the opposition parties to stop using violence. He said the church loses "its authentic face" when it subordinates the Gospel to "political or sociological categories." [Newsweek 11 Feb 85]

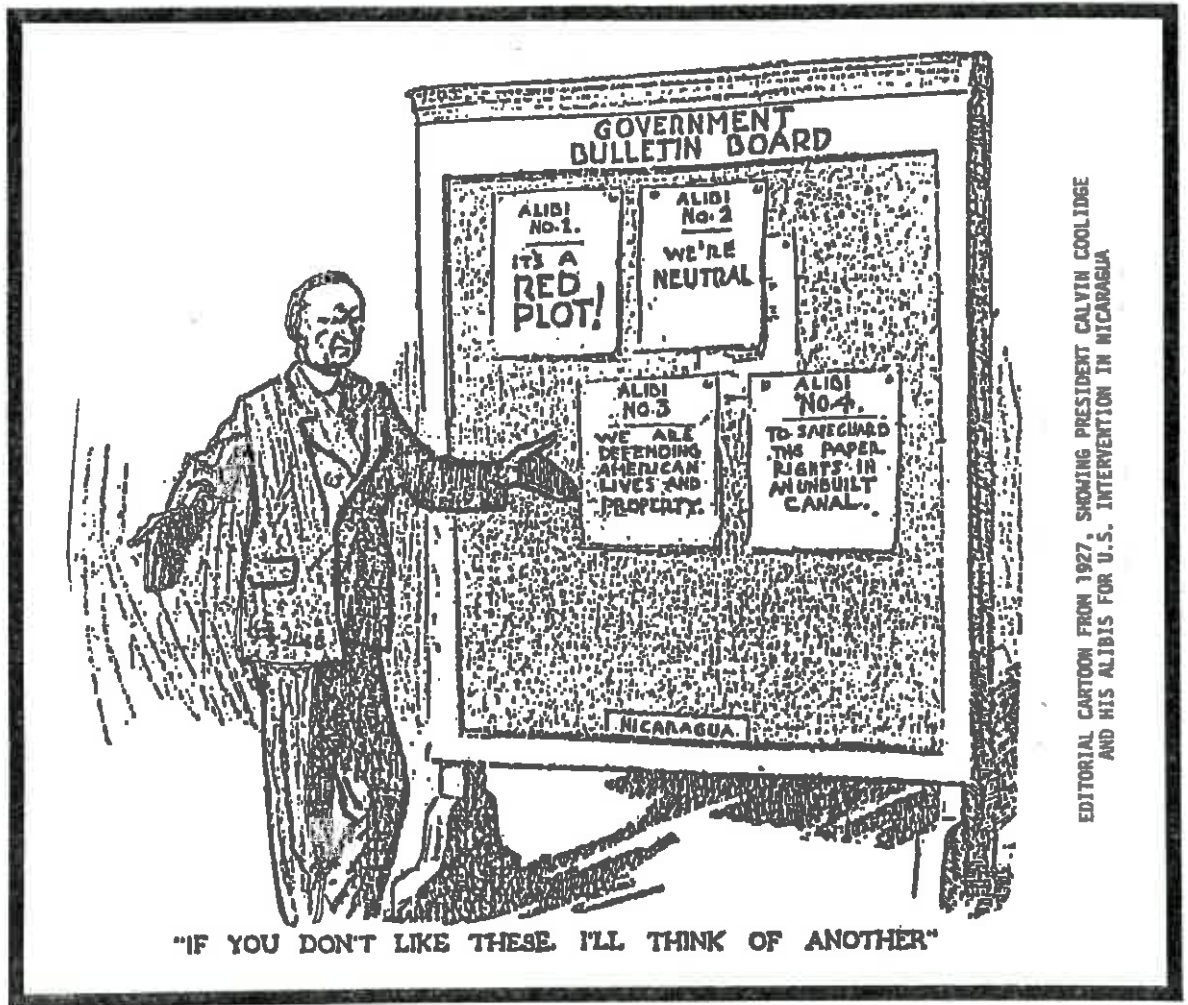
Sunday 3 February 1985

Pres Ortega said the US would be edging "closer to direct acts of aggression" if Reagan wins his campaign in Congress to send \$14m to the Contras. As evidence of the Administration's militarism, he cited the expansion of military exercises in Honduras, the walkout from the Manzanillo talks last month, and the boycott of the World Court. [NYTimes 4 Feb 85]

Wednesday 6 February 1985

"Support for freedom fighters is self-defense, and totally consistent with the O.A.S. and U.N. Charters," said Pres Reagan in his State of the Union Address [NYTimes 7 Feb 85]. He made the same claim in a speech 2 wks ago, saying that US aid to the Contras is legal because Nicaragua has violated international law since 1979 by exporting armed subversion. He added that support for Nicaragua by Iran, Libya and the PLO poses a new danger in Central America. [WSJournal 25 Jan 85]

-- David Whitehouse



EDITORIAL CARTOON FROM 1927, SHOWING PRESIDENT CALVIN COOLIDGE AND HIS ALIBIS FOR U.S. INTERVENTION IN NICARAGUA

Jamaicans seek \$5 million for anti-red fair

The Jamaican government is \$5m short of the \$7m it needs to put on an anti-communist youth conference and festival in early April. To mark 1985 as the UN's international youth year, Jamaica plans a four-day conference to discuss "major world questions and problems confronting

democracy." The 1200 young invitees include dissidents from South Africa, Chile, Poland (and other eastern European countries) in addition to youths from 100 countries not allied with the Soviet Union. The Jamaican govt hopes that 6000 more will buy tickets to the festival and that the entertainers, businessmen, foundations, and governments of the US, Europe, and W. Africa will write some big checks soon. Olivia Brange of the organizing committee in Jamaica says, "The event is in trouble. If we don't get the money, it won't be truly international. We would have lost the impact." [NYTimes 1 Feb 85]

temporary, uncontracted labor. Any figures on unemployment and underemployment in urban Peru must be deceptive, given the percentage of people who work between six and twelve hours a day selling small amounts of inexpensive merchandise in order to survive. Add to them the number who carry burdens, shine shoes, run errands or pilot people through bureaucracies on a day-to-day basis, and

you have a substantial labor force who work on a subsistence level without any job security.

Nonetheless some sectors of the Peruvian economy are doing quite well. Agricultural production for export has largely stabilized, after the "El Nino" disaster of 1983, though the fishing industry remains in ruins. A wide variety of multinationals are doing lucrative business in sectors such as automotive and appliance assembly and pharmaceuticals (although many assembly factories have closed due to increases in importation.) The textile industry continues to expand, and growth in textile exports is presented as a possible source of funds to pay the interest on the external debt.

The burst of activity in the construction industry which accompanied the return of foreign and expatriate capital on the reelection of Fernando Belaunde in 1980 has died down, leaving new industrial facilities and luxury apartment buildings. Sectors of Peruvian society whose income is directly related to imports and exports are experiencing a rising standard of living, which contributes to the further economic polarization in Peruvian society and to a burgeoning commerce in luxury goods.

The widespread corruption in the public sector is due at least partly to the inadequacy of public sector salaries. Other roots can also be distinguished: in a dependent economy, graft associated with international contracts is a fundamental part of the interaction between ministry and multinational, and the pattern continues on every level of interaction between the public and private sectors.

While some forms of corruption flourished in the previous military government (such as that associated with taxation of imports, negotiation of arms contracts or participation in the exportation of cocaine), the relaxing of economic controls implemented by the Belaunde government placed the national and international private sector in a position of dominance over the public sector. As a result, the government today is in no position to effectively control corruption which benefits private corporations.

The government is also in a very weak position in relationship to its military and police forces. A recent example has been the slow and ambivalent reaction to the disclosure of massive fiscal corruption on the part of the head of the police force (Guardia Civil). Having been ousted by a military coup in 1968, Belaunde has been quick to relinquish control of departments with substantial guerrilla activity to the military.

The massacres in Ayacucho have received international attention: a member of the Marines (Fuerza Naval), who are now in control of the region, claimed that as long as one out of ten people killed is a member of the

guerrilla group Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), current Marine policies are necessary and effective.

The anti-terrorist law and periodic states of emergency declared by the government have produced a freedom of action for the urban police forces that has been abused. The searching of homes and detention without charges have at times been extensive. In the past year the apparently arbitrary murder of citizens by drunken or drugged members of the police forces has become so common that cases appear in the papers almost every week, but the participants are seldom identified or brought to public trial.

The scale and power of the cocaine trade in a context of economic strangulation and widespread unemployment has produced another theme in which profit, violence and corruption are intimately related. There is great concern over the spread of addictive use of "pasta" (a product of the first stage of refining, containing kerosene) in the middle and working classes, the proven and suspected connections between major financial institutions, military officials and cocaine export, and the frequent and grisly deaths resulting from conflict within the drug trade.

After the death of 19 people participating in a coca eradication program in the zone of Huanuco, such programs have been cancelled. The U.S. had put pressure on the Belaunde government to create such programs, which were directed at local farmers, refiners, and transporters rather than at the major refining centers and export networks controlled by powerful national and foreign interests.

The local cocaine business has complex relations of cooperation and conflict with the three armed forces operating in the same regions: the police, the army and Sendero Luminoso. According to reliable sources from the zone of Huanuco, the basic relationships are: 1) the police confiscate drug shipments and resell them; 2) the armed forces cooperate in exportation; 3) Sendero provides protection of local cultivation and shipment in return for financial and logistical support in procuring supplies such as arms and medication. It is reasonable to suppose that similar relationships exist in other coca-producing zones, many of which are also zones of guerrilla activity.

There is opposition from diverse political positions to the policy of systematic assassinations which is the most publicized of Sendero's activities. There is wide consensus that Sendero represents a dogmatic and violent reaction to the political and economic situation which endangers more than enhances the potential for social progress. However, massacres which have initially been attributed to Sendero have regularly been revealed later to be the work of government forces. Reports of the discipline maintained in zones controlled by Sendero and the nature of their highly coordinated military actions suggest an organization whose policies while extremist, are not arbitrary. The government forces are at a disadvantage: they are outsiders and they are Sendero's primary and most obvious target. In this situation, they are more liable to engage in extreme and arbitrary violence.

Despite the fact that the parties in opposition to the current national government are politically dominant in municipal government and in the press, their public statements have focused on criticism of current policy rather than on the presentation of alternatives. The parties participating in the April elections are (from right to left):

1) Convergencia Democratica: Led by the Partido Popular Cristiano whose presidential candidate is Luis Bedoya, representing a clear economic platform in the tradition of the "Chicago School". With him is a splinter from the right wing of APRA (see below) led by Andres Townsend, a vice-presidential candidate. Though unlikely to approach a majority, this party maintains influence by gaining as many seats in Congress as possible and forging alliances with other right-wing tendencies.

2) Accion Popular (AP): The candidate of Belaunde's party is Javier Alva, leader of the conservative wing of the party and representative of the interests of large landholders. AP developed as a political force in the latter 50's and came to power in 1963: its policies continue to be in the tradition of the Alliance for Progress. AP returned to power after over 11 years of military rule in 1980, promising to develop transport, communication and educational facilities, and other public works throughout the country. It has been unable to accomplish its projects. Its social and economic policies have been unpopular, and it was badly beaten in the municipal elections in 1984. Alva is not an impressive candidate, and is not likely to win the elections.

3) Frente de Unidad Nacional: Essentially the party of the Military, Frente is led by Gen. Francisco Morales, who was Minister of Economy under the progressive military government of Gen. Velasco, and then came to power in a coup in 1978. He is respected both as a military figure and as a supporter of democracy. His candidacy will bring a contingent representing the military perspective into the Congress.

4) Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA): Candidate Alan Garcia has risen rapidly in the Aprista party. While only 35 years old, he has emerged as presidential candidate from the process of internal criticism and division which followed APRA's defeat in the 1980 elections. APRA is the most highly organized of Peru's political parties, comparable to the Peronists in Argentina or to Mexico's PRI. It developed in the early 1930's as a non-marxist revolutionary party, and is often criticized as neo-fascist in structure and rhetoric. The most truly populist of Peru's parties, APRA has a gripping history spanning three generations in which it has never held power, but has alternated between influence and clandestinity. Finally in 1978, its charismatic founder and leader, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, led the constitutional congress shortly before his death. In this election, the recently reconstructed Christian Democrats have thrown their lot in with APRA. Garcia is an excellent speaker who has come closest to presenting concrete policy alternatives to the Belaunde government; it is probable that this time APRA will win.

5) Izquierda Unida: A wide variety of socialist and communist parties, most of which developed in the

unions during the period of military rule (1968-1980), consolidated for the municipal elections of 1984 with impressive results. Non-partisan candidate Alfonso Barrantes won the post of Mayor of the capital city of Lima. He is now candidate for the presidency. The parties comprising IU are mainly composed of union activists and intellectuals, and the vice-presidential candidates are both university professors in the social sciences. In the process of adapting to electoral politics, the splintered left has attained greater unity and discipline, but has lost grass-roots party organization. It has offered the most structured and systematic criticism of current government policy, but has been less able to offer a clear position on challenges from its left, such as Sendero, and has presented no clear policies on problems of national economic structure and the foreign debt. It has support from PADIN, a currently progressive nationalist party representing small business interests, and from the trotskyist PRT of Hugo Blanco, which has dwindled in national importance. IU is hampered by ambivalence over whether it participates in electoral politics as a forum for national dialogue, or as a route to power. It will probably have a strong campaign, but a victory would come as a surprise.

A number of parties and alliances of the left have shed factions which do not accept electoral politics: Sendero is not the only group actively opposing support of and participation in elections. A number of organizations are preparing for armed struggle. The best known in the Tupac Amaru Movement, which recently arranged to have an announcement of

its program broadcast on television through the "Columbian style" kidnapping of a newscaster and photographer (who were treated well and released unharmed).

Nonetheless, participation in the campaign is likely to be strong throughout the country, and most Peruvians seem to expect improvements to come with the ascent to power of one or another candidate. At the same time, people of a variety of special interests and party orientations have commented that victory is likely to bring difficulties, if not catastrophe, to any party that comes to power. A possible military coup is often predicted to occur between 6 months and 2 years after the new government is formed, depending on which party dominates and on the problems it confronts. In the absence of a coup, any governing party will have to steer between the Scylla of domestic violence and the Charybdis of the external debt.

Sara Luisa Palmer

Peruvian inflation, now running at 111 percent annually, has caused the government to create a new -- larger -- unit of currency. The inti, named after an Incan sun god, will be worth 1000 sols. One sol is now worth about 17 cents. The government started to use intis February 1st for its own accounting; they will start circulating in 1986.

Intis will allow the government to avoid printing bills with lots of zeroes (and to avoid huge-sounding budgets -- this year Peru will spend just 24 billion intis instead of the projected 24 thousand billion sols). By 1990, sols will cease to be legal tender. [WSJournal 9 Jan 85]

Columbian Coal

Colombia, with the help of Exxon, is about to break into the international market for clean bituminous coal, easing the country's dependence on coffee exports. A new mine opened in the first week of this year in the desert of the Guajira peninsula. The pit at Cerrejon will boost Colombia's coal exports from 3m metric tons this year to 15m in 1989. A New York banker says: "Cerrejon makes a tremendous difference to their foreign-exchange profile. ...[W]ith exports getting under way, Colombia is a better risk." The coal market is already glutted, but Colombia will rely on low production costs to cut into the market share of other producers, especially of US exporters to Europe.

Last year coffee made up \$1.7b of Colombia's \$3.7b in legal exports. Exports of marijuana and cocaine were much higher than that, say most estimates, but their impact on the economy is uncertain, and, being un-taxed, the illegal crops do nothing for the government's credit rating. In 1989, when Cerrejon is slated to reach full production, coal revenue should equal half the coffee total, and, says an Exxon spokesman, an expanded mine could make coal

exports "comparable to those from coffee" in the next decade.

Exxon put up half the \$3.2b (and all of the technology) for the project in 1976 when oil prices made coal investments look super-profitable. But coal has risen only 10 cents per ton since then (after jumping \$30 to \$50.83 during the oil embargo). If prices hold, Exxon will make money anyway, says a company spokesman. After royalties and taxes, Colombia's state oil company, Carbocol, should take 85 percent of the profits through the year 2000. Then Exxon will be out, leaving Cerrejon's 1.6b ton reserve with another century or so of productivity.

The Cerrejon operation is huge; miners will dig the equivalent of a new Panama Canal every 18 months, 50 tons of coal in each shovel-full, and trains will carry 10,000-ton loads at 55mph on new rails across the desert to Colombia's largest port, Puerto Bolivar. The big gray pit will be Latin America's largest coal mine.

Currently 30 percent of the workers are Guajiro Indians. The work force will be cut back sharply when the mine is completed. [WSJournal 11 Jan 85]

Shorter Items

Arnel Duque, director of the beverages and liquor branch of Cuba's Food Ministry, said on Havana TV that "without a doubt" there has been an "explosion in hard-liquor consumption." [WSJournal 11 Jan 85]

"Bolivia sought leaders of an abortive coup that was to have begun Wednesday, an official said. Suspects included two retired army officers. President Hernan Siles Zuazo, who was abducted in a failed coup attempt in June, faced military rebellion last month when he fired the army chief, who was accused of planning a coup." [WSJournal 18 Jan 85]

"Protests erupted again in Jamaica over fuel price increases after demonstrations that left at least four people dead. The price boosts, part of an IMF austerity plan, proved government economic policy has collapsed, the opposition said." [WSJournal 17 Jan 85]

Chilean police on the island of Chiloe arrested novelist Jose Donoso and 24 others on January 31 for protesting the dismissal of 3 dissident writers from their teaching jobs. All 25 were charged with holding an anti-govt demonstration, which is a crime under Chile's current state of siege. [NYTimes 1 Feb 85]

ON SANCTUARY

The INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) arrested 43 refugees and 16 sanctuary workers Jan. 14 in a nationwide sweep. The resulting court cases and ensuing outcry have raised public attention about the issue of sanctuary.

It is estimated that there are over half a million Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugees in the United States. The INS has been deporting people at a rate of one or two thousand per month, often without a hearing on their eligibility for asylum. Documented evidence indicates that many of those deported are greeted with torture, imprisonment, or murder upon their return. As a humanitarian response, the Southside Presbyterian Church in Tuscon, AZ, became the first church to offer sanctuary in March, 1982. Today, this movement has grown to include over 200 congregations, a diverse coalition of clergy and church members from coast to coast. Besides enabling people to focus their concern for the oppressed peoples of Guatemala and El Salvador in a direct, humanitarian manner, giving sanctuary has also provided a forum for spreading information about the tragic reality of conditions in Central America.

The sanctuary movement is very much alive locally. Last spring the Ithaca Society of Friends voted to offer sanctuary, joining similar efforts in Rochester, Syracuse, Albany, and Oneonta. A number of social concerns committees and organizations of other local churches and the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Ithaca have given official support to the action of the Friends. Because of a shortage of resources, most notably housing, the Friends had to decline to offer sanctuary to a Salvadoran family of ten. Currently they are awaiting the arrival of refugees.

Among the refugees arrested in the recent INS sweep were Alejandro and Leticia Rodriguez,

Salvadorans now in sanctuary in Rochester. Within two hours of their arrest 200 people arrived at the Rochester INS office to demonstrate their solidarity with the Rodriguezes. Alejandro and Leticia were not "processed" in Buffalo according to usual procedure but were released within hours. The following Sunday they addressed a service and rally of recommitment to sanctuary that was held on their behalf. They have applied for political asylum, as have most of the arrested refugees, and their struggle now goes to the courts.

The arrests raise three issues: the concept of sanctuary, the legality of the deportations, and the use of military means to political ends.

Sanctuary has biblical roots, beginning when Moses set aside cities and places of refuge in Canaan where people could seek asylum from "blood avengers." It was incorporated into Roman civil law, medieval canon law, and English common law. Our country was founded as a sanctuary for people fleeing political and religious persecution. If the courts should decide that Sanctuary is illegal, this will represent a major departure from the spiritual roots of this country.

In 1980, the US signed a United Nations accord on the status of refugees from countries where their political or religious freedoms would be threatened. Deportation of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees violates the agreement.

The military assistance given to ensure "favorable" political structures in Central America results in untold suffering there. US aid buys the bullets of the death squads. Thus, a major motivation for refugees to leave hiding and publicly to enter sanctuary is to communicate with North Americans about the human impact of US policies in Central America.

-- John Rogers

A Parting Shot



When asked about the Administration's foreign policy failures, departing UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick said there were "lots" of goals unachieved, but she singled out failure to enact the Kissinger Commission's proposals about Central America. Kissinger suggested to her at a party recently that the unread copies of his report be dropped on Nicaragua. The report called for \$9.4b in economic aid and "significantly increased" military aid. (NYTimes 1 Feb 85)

WHAT IS CUSLAR?

The Committee on U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a Cornell University-based group which works in Ithaca and the surrounding areas to promote a 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. Within this context we support the right of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean for self-determination and their efforts to free themselves from a legacy of colonialism, underdevelopment, and oppression.

Our calendar of events includes a very popular film series, speakers, and panel discussions on current issues. Our office is a resource center, with a large variety of up-to-date publications including periodicals, pamphlets, books, slideshows, and materials from national and international sources. CUSLAR receives ongoing information from various national solidarity networks, as well as other upstate groups.

The CUSLAR office is in G-29, Anabel Taylor Hall, at Cornell (phone: 256-7293). The office is open to the community on weekdays; weekly meetings are held on Mondays at 5pm in the CUSLAR office. Come join us. There is much work to be done and we welcome participation of individuals as well as local organizations. Bring us your suggestions and comments on our programs and written materials.

CALENDAR

February 16- Nonviolence preparation, for anyone interested in Nicaragua Contingency Plan Actions. 1-7 pm. in the Founder's Room. Contact Carolyn 273-5255.

February 21. Film: "Tupamaros". (Uruguay) 1972. 50 mins. Color. Uris Hall. Free. (The film Chuquiago, scheduled originally for this date, has been postponed to April 11.) "Tupamaros is an exclusive view from the inside of Latin America's most renowned urban guerrilla organization, Uruguay's National Liberation Movement (MLN).

February 22. Phone-in. Stop the contra war against the people of Nicaragua. Tell Reagan he has no mandate for his war against the people of Nicaragua. Tell your congressman to vote against renewed contra aid.

----- President-- 202-456-7639. Public opinion message, Monday through Friday, two sentences in length. Or send letters to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C., 20500.

----- Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan--202-224-4451

----- Sen. Alfonso D'Amato--202-224-6542

----- Rep. Matthew McHugh--202-225-6335; U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 20515.

FEBRUARY 24-An extraordinary program on Sanctuary, sponsored by the Concerned Members of the Human Ministry Committee of the Cornell Catholic Community: 12:00-3:00 featuring Maryknoll Sister Marian Pahl and Salvadoran refugee Alejandro Rodriguez, Anabel Taylor Hall.

FEBRUARY 26-"Roses in December", 8:00, Uris Hall, \$2. This film chronicles the life of Jean Donovan, the lay missionary murdered with three American nuns by government security forces in El Salvador.

February 28. Film: "Bitter Cane" (Haiti) 1983. 75 mins. Color. Uris Hall. Free. Filmed in Haiti, this documentary offers an in-depth look at Haitian society, past and present, examining the historical and economic roots of the Haitian refugee crisis, and the effect of this situation on American workers.

March 2. Memorial service for victims of US funded contra violence in Nicaragua. Marching from federal building (Babcock Hall) to the commons. Call 256-7293 for details.

March 8-9. Teach-in on the current US sponsored war in Nicaragua. Call 256-7293 for details.

The CUSLAR Newsletter provides CUSLAR members and other concerned individuals with the opportunity to present information and analysis on topics pertaining to Latin America and the Caribbean. Therefore, the positions of the articles in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the positions taken by CUSLAR as an organization.