

Committee
On
US
Latin
American
Relations

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

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EL SALVADOR, DRUGS:



JUST SAY 'WAR'

IN THIS ISSUE

El Salvador: Local and Nationwide Action

Media Manipulation: Shaping U.S. Perception of El Salvador

The Kingpin's New Clothes: President Bush's National Security Complex

These Are the Children of Sandino: Faces the U.S. Media Will Not Behold

Bringing the Third-World War Home

The distinguished Colombian jurist Juan Fernandez Carrasquilla views drugs as a "scapegoat" for diverting "public attention from real problems that lack solutions to a false enemy against which all national and individual efforts are mobilized." Public opinion polls in the United States place drug abuse and trafficking at the top of the list of national concerns. President Bush has accepted a "mandate" to deal with the problem in the way he knows best: by waging covert and overt war on it.

While drug abuse is a vital concern, the real enemy in Latin America and here, is poverty augmented by marginalization and police and military control of angry, oftentimes desperate people. The crisis in El Salvador, for example, stems from two percent of the population owning sixty percent of the land. Bush is missing the mark in the drug war here as well as in El Salvador. His war attacks poor people, not poverty. Under the guise of protecting democracy from "narco-terrorism," Bush sends military aid and the Drug Enforcement Agency to eradicate peasants' coca crops in Colombia, Bolivia and Peru. He refuses, however, to consider debt reduction for those nations and therefore writes off creating the kind of stable economy that might make other crops viable for the farmers. Ironically, the drug kingpins often benefit from eradication efforts because they boost the price of the drugs. Here at home, Bush opts to throw drug addicts in expensive prisons rather than to raise the minimum wage or consider the desperation caused by chronic unemployment, poverty and lack of hope. Miami bankers happily afloat in millions of laundered drug dollars on the other hand probably have little to fear from the Bush administration (In 1986, President Reagan called off Operation Greenback which was investigating drug money laundering operations in several prominent Miami banks).

Meanwhile, the President continues to ignore the dangerous *legal* addictions endemic in this country. Many Americans are killing themselves with alcohol, nicotine and caffeine, not to mention television and consumerism, which have their own destructive effects. What is wrong with us? Could it be that Bush and the Right have taken America's credibility for a colossal ride? What exactly was the former Vice-president's role with Ollie North that allowed the contras to traffic and sell millions of dollars worth of cocaine right under George's nose? We all would love to know. But the truth is probably the greatest national security risk running.

-Bruce Armstrong

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CORRECTION

We regret the omission of the footnotes from Allison G. Power's article "Agricultural Policies and the Environment" in our October newsletter. Anyone who would like a copy of the complete article should contact CUSLAR.

Salvadoran Atrocities Spark Local and Nationwide Action; New Coalition Formed

Wally Babcock

On Sun., Nov. 19, in an attempt to create the most broad-based and well organized possible response to the recent escalation of violence in El Salvador, people from many sectors of the Ithaca community called a meeting where they formed the Emergency Coalition for El Salvador (ECFES) and selected a steering committee.

The Coalition decided its first actions would be to hold two rallies immediately, the first on the Cornell campus and another downtown. Due to the bitterly cold weather and the proximity of Thanksgiving break, the Cornell rally on November 21, did not draw a large crowd. However, the downtown rally on Sat., Nov. 25, was very successful. Over 100 people gathered to hear a group of speakers discuss the situation in El Salvador and here in the U.S. [see p 4 for excerpts from the statements]. ECFES collected \$300 for material aid to the civilian population, and at least 300 signatures on a petition to President Bush calling for cutting off military aid to El Salvador and supporting a negotiated end to the conflict. In addition to the rallies, ECFES set up information tables on the Commons on Friday and Saturday following the rally.

The Coalition is planning further events, and CUSLAR has agreed to serve as a clearinghouse for ECFES. CUSLAR helped out logistically with the rallies, tabling, and petitions. For more information, call CUSLAR at 255-7293.

Nationwide protests underscore renewed interest

From the response here and nationwide, it is clear that El Salvador and Central America are back as major issues in American politics. A sampling of actions taken across the country follows:

Sat., Nov. 18 Washington: 3000 people marched from the Vietnam Wall to the White House, where they blockaded Pennsylvania Ave. for 3 hours. Jesse Jackson blasted U.S. policy in El Salvador and declared that U.S. leaders "are on the wrong side of his-

tory." 95 people were arrested. [see Looking at Ourselves, p. 6] On Mon., Nov. 20, San Francisco: 130 clergy and other members of the religious community were arrested as part of a large demonstration which shut down the U.S. Federal Building for several hours. The five Catholic universities in the Bay area cancelled classes and urged their students to participate. In Chicago: George Bush, speaking at a political fund-raiser, was interrupted with questions on El Salvador by a group of eleven people. Minneapolis: 50 people were arrested in an occupation of the offices of Sen. Dave Durenberger (R-MN).



Rev. Barbara Heck speaks at the rally on the Commons.
PHOTO BY ERIC PATTERSON

Federal Building.

Tue., Nov. 21, San Francisco: Massive civil disobedience to shut down the U.S. Federal Building. Hundreds participated. Bellingham, WA: Major street demonstration. Albany, NY: Demonstration at the National Guard Armory. Wed., Nov. 22, Los Angeles: Major civil disobedience at the U.S.

(Information on National actions compiled by the Pledge of Resistance)

Speaking Out On El Salvador Reverend Barbara Heck

This crisis in El Salvador is an opportunity for us as Americans to flesh out and decide what matters to us as Christians and what doesn't matter. It is an opportunity for us as Christians to ask ourselves:

How do we live in light of what is happening?

To whom or what do we say YES?

and to whom or what do we say NO?

To these questions, the Bible has some guidelines, even mandates, for how we live in light of these matters. We are to say YES to God and NO to evil. It is a considerable exercise to decide which is which, and yet we are called to take a stand and know to whom or what we say YES and NO. Our government wants us to see this crisis as a conflict between *guerillas* and the *government's military*, yet we as Christian are called to see this crisis as a conflict between *rich* and *poor*.

(continued)

Representative Matt McHugh

(CUSLAR regrets it did not receive this statement in time to be read at the rally)

At this critical moment it is essential that people all across our country make known their revulsion over the ongoing violence in El Salvador and their insistence that our government's policy be redirected toward achieving a cease fire and renewed negotiations between the FMLA and the government.

A military solution is not possible in El Salvador. This tragic civil war has already cost 70,000 lives, many of them innocent civilians. What the people of El Salvador need is not more war and military arms, but a genuine commitment to peace by both sides.

In the wake of the urban combat of recent days and the brutal murders of the Jesuit priests and their associates—murders that are symptomatic of many other indiscriminate killings in that society—those supplying arms have a special responsibility to get the contending forces to stop their killing and human rights abuses. Since the United States has been arming the government forces, it is our profound obligation to be much more aggressive in getting the Salvadoran government to negotiate in good faith, to protect innocent people, and to bring to justice those responsible for heinous crimes, including those who murdered the Jesuit priests. . .

Last week I . . . drafted and supported an amendment to the Foreign Aid Appropriations bill that would have held up 30% of the military aid to El Salvador. Under the circumstances it was a modest amendment, but unfortunately the House chose not to consider it by a vote of 215 to 194. A similar amendment was also defeated in the Senate by a vote of 58 to 39.

The fact is that we do not yet have a majority in either House to curtail military aid. Earlier this year I offered another amendment to require Congressional approval before the second half of this year's aid could be delivered to El Salvador. That amendment lost on a vote of 233 to 185.

If we are to turn this situation around—if we are to have any hope of refocusing U.S. policy in a more positive direction—we need more Americans to express themselves on this issue. We need more voices raised in protest. Hopefully, those voices will criticize both sides when abuses occur. The guerrillas have committed their share of heinous acts. They were also wrong to bring the war to the urban neighborhoods of innocent people. They should not be exempt from our criticism and condemnation. But the fact is that we are not funding the guerrillas. We are funding the government; and we have a particular responsibility to hold that government accountable—to see that it is truly committed to peace and justice. If the government fails to meet that standard after so many years of American aid, it does not deserve our support.

Heck, continued

And God again and again stands on the side of the poor, the oppressed, the hungry, the powerless and calls us to stand on their side as well unequivocally saying YES to them, unequivocally saying "YES, you have a right to life free of terror," unequivocally saying "YES, you have a right to grow your corn and beans on a plot of land" unequivocally saying "YES, you have a right to be free of poverty and not live at the expense of the rich."

It is most striking to me that the Pope, in response to what is happening in El Salvador, sent a message calling for peace and reconciliation *not* to San Salvador, but to Washington. It matters how we as Americans live. It matters what decisions we make. It matters which values inform our lives. It matters who we choose to be the foundation of our life. It matters whether we give in to fear when the world shakes and crumbles or whether we hold fast to faith.

This crisis in El Salvador like any crisis forces us to decide what matters to us. If we choose God to be the ultimate that matters to us in our life, we choose a foundation which can not be shaken though the world shakes and crumbles. If we choose God as our foundation we cannot be shaken or moved and then, some things don't matter. It doesn't matter if we are persecuted. It doesn't matter if we are tortured. It doesn't matter if we are given up and even killed.

It seems to me that the six Jesuit priests who were brutally murdered on Friday in El Salvador lived as if it mattered, and didn't matter. . . [they] worked in one of Central America's leading universities. They were strong advocates of human rights and spoke

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Al Davidoff President, Local 2300, UAW

First, let me state that our Union, the UAW has a position opposing any military aid to El Salvador. I was able to vote in favor of the following position at our Union's recent national convention:

"In El Salvador, the situation has grown worse with the return of death squads and the capture of the presidency and assembly there by the Arena Party. Since 1980, more than 5,000 trade unionists have been murdered by the right-wing death squads. . .

"To date, despite more than 60,000 deaths, not a single military officer has been convicted of human rights violations in El Salvador -an incredible outrage.

Heck, continued

out that justice be given the weak and the needy, that the poor be delivered from the hand of the wicked. They lived as if these things mattered, and because of that, they illicited anonymous death threats which meant to intimidate them, instill fear in them, shut them up.

But those death threats didn't matter to them. They held fast to their firm foundation. They held fast to God, and God held fast to them and they were not shaken or moved. They did not give in to fear but held fast to their faith. Their prestige and rank in society protected them for a while but not forever.

According to Scott Simon on NPR last week, the priests refused to put away the pictures they had accumulated showing beheaded men, women with their breasts

The UAW, with over 1 million members nationally, continues to oppose military aid to El Salvador."

Locally let me say that the 1,200 members of Local 2300 share CUSLAR's outrage at the actions of our own government and the right-wing government in El Salvador. It is no surprise that our own government, which so brazenly supports welfare for the rich through capital gains tax reductions and so brutally defunds programs for the poor, would be in sympathy with the El Salvador government's bombing of poor



beaten off, body parts cut up and disposed of in plastic bags on the streets. They witnessed and documented the work of the right-wing death squads and on Friday, their day came.

Thirty men dressed in military uniforms came into their rooms while they were sleeping, dragged them outside, tortured them, then shattered their heads with bullets and pulled their brains out of their heads, throwing them on the ground.

Friends, these are our brothers in Christ.

Friends, these are members of our one human family.

We cannot let this day pass

neighborhoods to kill the FMLN. In fact, this policy is only an extension of what the El Salvador government was doing through economic neglect and the efficient work of the death squads already.

The U.S. Government wants to make Central America safe for Donald Trump. The U.S. Government wants Central America to be a source of cheap labor for corporations to exploit. But workers and we know that you can no more bomb away people's will for justice any more than you can outsmart worker's desire to organize with high-priced attorneys

without recognizing how much their faith mattered to them, how far it took them in the face of persecution and even death. Their lives were not lived in vain. Though hated by some and put to death, the paradox of Christianity shows itself. They now live on in our hearts and minds. They have gained their lives.

May we Americans who live in an overstuffed and affluent society, who have so much freedom that we have forgotten how precious it really is, live with such courage as we respond to the crisis in El Salvador.

*Barbara Heck is Chaplain of
the Protestant Cooperative
Ministry at Cornell*

Looking At Ourselves

Fred Wilcox

"The problem of violence is the problem of a whole social structure which is outwardly ordered and respectable, and inwardly ridden by psychopathic obsessions and delusions. Violence today is white-collar violence, the systematically organized bureaucratic and technological destruction of human beings... the real problem is death and even genocide as big business." -Thomas Merton, Faith and Violence

Entering Washington, D.C. is always an enlightening and emotional experience for me - rows of burned out abandoned houses and shabby motels, the homeless squatting in their cardboard campsites, stretch limousines with tinted windows and huge aerials, Medieval apartment complexes, drawbridges pulled up tight, armed guards protecting their occupants. And memories of teargas and nightsticks, a policeman charging out of the trees, leaping for the homerun, smashing my right knee to pieces, cursing, beating, dumping the contents of my wallet on the ground, threatening to blow out my brains. The next day school children would stand on that very spot, craning to see the tip of the Washington Monument, absorbing, as I once did, the tour guide's stories as though they were true.

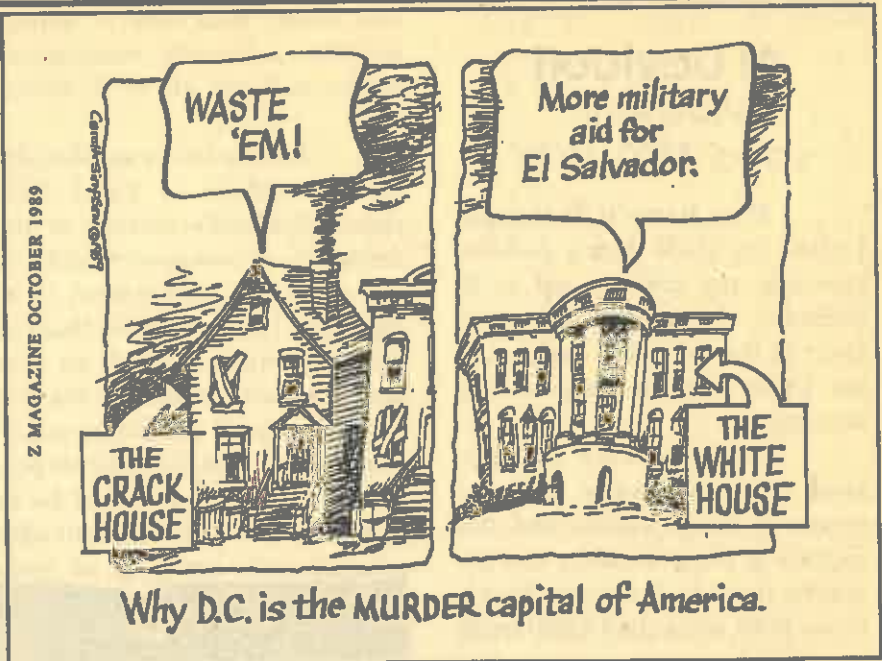
Now we assemble across from

the Lincoln Memorial, clusters of people holding signs: **STOP THE DEATH SQUADS; 70,000 DEAD NO MORE; U.S. OUT OF EL SALVADOR; FMLN IS GOING TO WIN; WANTED FOR MURDER: FREDDY CHRISTIANI.** A cold wind flaps cloth and posterboard, chaffing our hands and faces. And then we are moving, women with babies in strollers, old men and women holding hands, college students, Vietnam veterans, children waving little red and white FMLN pennants. Past the State Department, drab looking, somber, and, with the exception of a few people clustered in top floor windows, altogether deserted; past the Federal Reserve Building, pompous and clean; the old Executive Office Building, powerfully baroque and silent, as though brooding over some difficult passage in its memoirs, some troubling episode in a lifetime of intrigue and deceit.

We chant, "Seventy thousand dead no more, U.S. out of El Salvador," and march, past hotdog and pretzel stands, curious tourists, clusters of grinning children, the Organization of Ameri-

can States (OAS) building, past a statue of Simon Bolivar.

In front of the White House, mid-Pennsylvania Avenue, we stop and sit down. "In El Salvador," one speaker says, "women who are picked up by security forces are routinely gang raped, tortured, often murdered." "In El Salvador," says another speaker, "U.S. pilots are now flying the jets that are bombing the barrios with white phosphorous, burning women and children to death." "In El Salvador, U.S. advisors are fighting side by side with the same troops who killed the six priests, their housekeeper and her fifteen-year-old daughter this week." And all of this, say the speakers, was paid for by *our* U.S. taxpayers' money. \$1.5 million a day to pay for the helicopter gunships which are strafing poor neighborhoods with (1,000 rounds a minute) gatling guns. \$1.5 million a day to train and equip units of the Salvadorean Army who routinely torture and massacre their own people. 1.5 million a day to support people who are waging war on the Catholic Church in El Salvador, killing nuns and priests who are



"guilty" of trying to feed the poor, relocate refugees, and bring some solace and sanity to the traumatized children of this Central American warzone.

"In Europe," says Jesse Jackson, "walls are tumbling down. But here, they are going up." All around the world, people are demanding and getting freedom, while the United States continues to support oppression and violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa. Jesse urges the demonstrators to "keep hope alive" by staying in the streets. Do not fear arrest, he says, or beatings, or jail. Compared to what the Salvadorans are suffering, it is a small price to pay.

Next to me, a Canadian with whom I've been walking asks if it is "normal" to have a lot of police at these demonstrations. Yes, I reply. Is it normal, he asks, for the police to have clubs? Oh yes, I say. Normal, he persists, to have mounted police? Sure, I shrug. But then I turn to look. To our left, a three-deep line of blue coats, huge clubs held at present arms, stiff and ready. Across the street, mounted police. To our right another phalanx. Hundreds and hundreds of police. In front of a White House fence a policewoman holding a teargas blooper gun, down, inconspicuously against her left leg. And then they are moving, wading into demonstrators who are sitting, arms linked, in the middle of the street. Not swinging, but shoving with their clubs and twisting, pushing people facedown into the street, knees in their backs, arms yanked hard behind and the line of

blue in front of us suddenly charging, still not swinging but pushing forward with their sticks, knocking a few people down. We recover, watch the arrests, one young man shouting, "You can't do that. We see what you're doing." "Shut up," a police captain warns, or you'll get the same." "Can't he talk?" I ask. "You mean, right here in front of the White House you're telling us we can't even talk?" "And you're next," the captain warns, his nightstick clutched against his chest level in both hands.

"In Europe walls are tumbling down. But here, they are going up." All around the world, people are demanding and getting freedom, while the United States continues to support oppression and violence in El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa.

As the arrests continue, I stand toe to toe with a black policeman, so close that his club is touching my chest. Up and down the line people are chanting, "70,000 dead no more..." I wonder if the police will charge, if the horses will rear and snort and the teargas blooper explode, cannisters whistling past our heads. "Mr. Brooks," I say to the policeman whose nose is only inches from mine, "How long do you plan on staying?" Smiling, he replies, "Til you leave." And so we stand, more arrests, more speakers, and I look into Mr. Brook's eyes and walk the line, looking at those we face. Some of the policemen and women are angry, others indifferent, a few, it appears, in a

trance. Drums, whistles, and chanting. One chicano officer eyes closed and smiling, sways to the music, club held across his chest.

I try to establish some contact, some way of telling those who at any moment may commence beating us, that we do not hate them. Nor do we wish them any harm. We are all fellow Americans, not killers, not members of Death Squads, not Nazis. But the men and women facing us appear somehow to be shrouded, locked inside their own frustrations and

fears, futility and resentment hammered, chisled, into their faces. I look at them and think that, were we to sit down and talk over a beer, we would surely have a lot in common. We might discuss our mutual hopes and dreams, agreeing that our cities are war-zones, our environment trashed, our leaders more interested in self-serving proclamations than in creative, planet-saving initiatives. We might agree that all of

us live on this small, fragile egg twirling in the void and that sometimes we get scared, sometimes we want to scream so loud that someone, somewhere, will have to listen.

Standing in front of that line of police officers and watching the arrests, it seems to me that we, the police officers and demonstrators, are looking at ourselves. And that here there are no abstractions, no political rhetoric or glittering generalities. In El Salvador we are killing the poor, and here as well. In El Salvador, we are killing ourselves, here as well. Here, directly in front of the White House and in the streets of the nations capitol, we are forced to look with

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stunning clarity at the real reasons why we are supporting genocide in Central America. We are forced to look directly and painfully at ourselves, forced to ask the question: When the last El Salvadorean is dead, what then?

Somehow, even with the walls tumbling in Europe and members of the human family reaching, desperately it seems, toward one another, we will be able to find new enemies. After all, our President and our Congress tell us, that's what keeps us strong.

Later, long after the arrests have ended and the police line moves away, we set out to find our friends who've been taken to

jail. After stopping at several rather ominous looking buildings, we locate and try to enter the place where they are being kept. Two huge, unshaven, hollow-eyed and out of uniform men demand to know where "we think we are going." "Inside," we say. "Get lost," they reply. "Can we find out if our friends are there, if they're all right?" "No." "Can we help bail them out?" "No." "Get behind that fence," one of the giants points, "and stay there, unless you want to join the people inside."

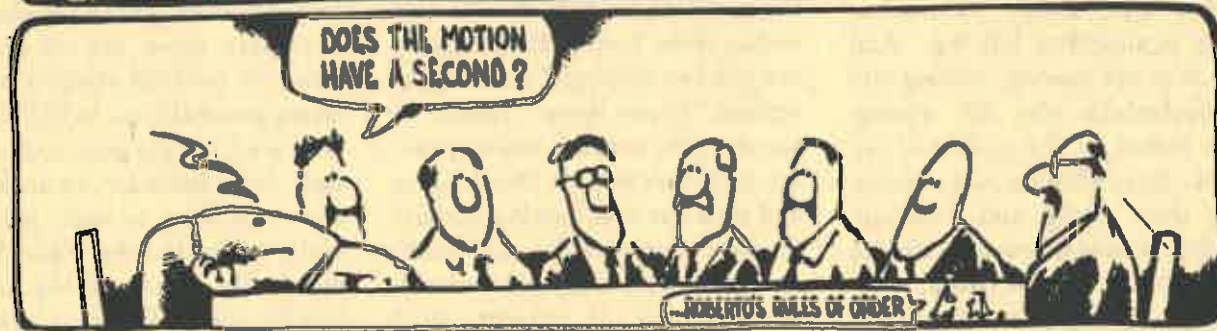
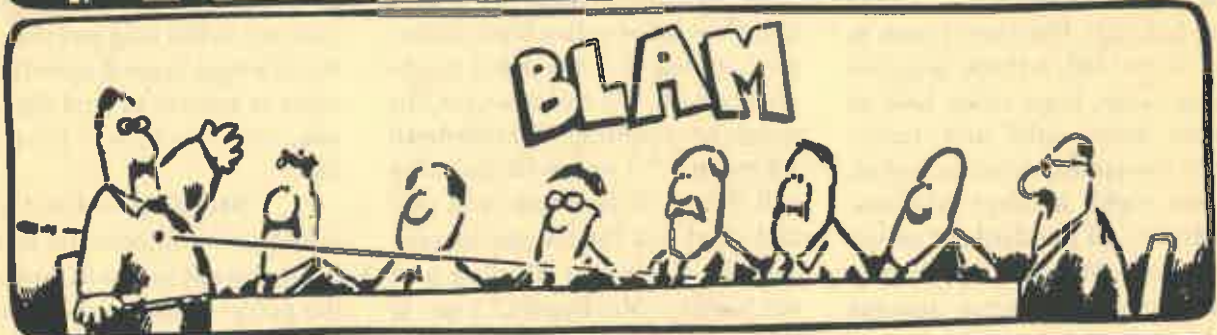
A Salvadoran woman waits with a friend or relative. Her daughter, arrested at the demonstration, is inside. "Will they kill or

torture the prisoners," she asks a policeman. "Why don't you go back to El Salvador where you belong?" he answers.

The Canadian and I walk the streets, looking for a place to get warm, perhaps to have a drink. "Go back to your own country." For the police who established an instant *state of siege* in front of the White House, and for those of us who had come to say, "No, not in our name," I wonder, really wonder, just where that mythical land might be.

Fred Wilcox wrote Waiting for an Army to Die. He is a member of Veterans For Peace, and teaches writing at Ithaca College

The Salvador Committee to Eliminate Death Squads Holds its First Meeting



By Mike for the Buffalo News

MEDIA MANIPULATION: SHAPING U.S. PERCEPTION OF EL SALVADOR

Eric Patterson

In the days since the assassination of the six Jesuit priests in El Salvador, we have heard the sages of politics and the media repeatedly make pious expressions of shock and disgust—for example, the statement of November 16th by the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador in which he said, "this is a crime of such repugnance that to say I condemn or deplore seems inadequate. It is a barbaric act that has brought shame to El Salvador. I have difficulty imagining what sort of animals would, in cold blood, execute priests and other innocents." Certainly no one whose heart hasn't become completely deadened to the pain of others by the pursuit of property can disagree—the horror of the killings is stupefying. But why didn't we hear such lamentations when the office of FENASTRAS, one of the most active and outspoken labor groups in El Salvador, was destroyed by a bomb, killing ten people? Why haven't we heard them over the last four months as the bodies of the more than four hundred civilians murdered by the Salvadoran military since Cristiani took power have been discovered? Why haven't we heard them over the past ten years, as the Salvadoran military and its death squads bombed villages, fired on demonstrations, and abducted and killed thousands of civilians? Why haven't we heard them in the last few days, as Salvadoran government forces strafed and bombed poor neighborhoods throughout the capital city? And why is it that the only times we

have heard similar condemnations were in 1982, when two U.S. land reform specialists were killed in San Salvador and in 1980, when four U.S. churchwomen were raped and murdered and when the Archbishop of San Salvador was assassinated as he celebrated mass?

There is a clear parallel with the assassination of ABC photographer Bill Stewart, whose horrible death at the hands of the Guardia Nacional elicited a wave of outrage in the U.S. far more intense than did Somoza's destruction of tens of thousands of Nicaraguan lives.

The outrage of our leaders is selective—the murders of U.S. citizens, and of Salvadorans who rank high in an institution which is an integral part of U.S. as well as Salvadoran society, somehow are more shocking, more disgusting, than those of the more than 70,000 Salvadoran peasants, laborers, union activists, and churchpeople who have perished at the hands of their own government since 1979. For those who recall the Nicaraguan insurrection of 1978-79, there is a clear parallel with the assassination of ABC photographer Bill Stewart, whose horrible death at the hands of the Guardia Nacional, videotaped by another reporter, elicited a wave of outrage in the U.S. far more intense than did Somoza's destruction of tens of thousands of Nicaraguan lives. If you are an "American," or have in-

stitutional status which somehow makes you like one, your life and death matter more. No one in U.S. public life today—not even David Duke—willingly admits to being a racist, but isn't this selective moral condemnation evidence that the darker your skin and the less property you own, the less your life matters?

This is hardly the only limitation which marks official perceptions of the continuing carnage in El Salvador. Here are some more which I have observed over the last two weeks, during the recent insurgent offensive in San Salvador. I'm sure others have noticed many more, for they are endless.

Everyone in the U.S. is taught to celebrate individualism as a fundamental good of "American" life, but of course the pervasive impact of this ideal on the perception of reality typical of our culture rarely is examined or criticized. When we look at the world around us, at the past and toward the future, we think in terms of individuals who can shape the course of history—founding fathers, statesmen, reformers, rebels, martyrs, planners, inventors, prophets, madmen, presidential prospects—we all can recite lists of them. But when it comes to thinking in terms of classes and other broad economic/social/political divisions, most "Americans" have a harder time. After all, aren't we all supposed to be "middle class," whatever that means? To conceptualize history as a process which develops as the result of a struggle for power between social groups

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with differing economic interests is alien to our schools, movies, tv shows, and above all, our news. Thus, when we learn about the problems of racism, or poverty, or sexual violence, or drugs, or about El Salvador, what we get is reports and dramas (the two often are hard to distinguish) which focus on vivid individuals, especially individuals who are recognizably like us. We see and hear about Father Ellacuria, Jean Donovan, or Archbishop Romero, but not about the racial/class structure of El Salvador, the distribution of wealth, the relationship of the military and the oligarchy, the social bases of political parties and movements. If we see or read a report about the FENASTRAS bombing, it is the vivid details of personal suffering which are emphasized, not the role of the organization in the Salvadoran labor movement and the reasons why other class groups might seek to destroy it to protect their interests.

Of course, the individualistic orientation of our society and culture is hardly the only cause of this myopia; because the M-16's and the A-37's, not to mention the strategy for using them and the food and supplies for those who do, all come from the U.S., our government constantly seeks to present the regime with which it has allied itself in the best possible light. Hence whenever it is feasible, officials concerned with foreign policy do everything they can not to draw attention to the manifold outrages of the Salvadoran military against any who dare to act or even speak for change. As long as the bodies are those of Salvadorans who aren't too much like us, they will be counted and presented to us in such a way as to suggest a "moderation in human rights abuses" if

at all possible, or better yet, they won't be mentioned at all.

The tactic of official silence also works to insure that the public will never know that even U.S. citizens who work for change in El Salvador are in danger; a U.S. labor activist, Mark Anner, was nearly killed in the FENASTRAS bombing, but did we hear Bush or Ambassador Walker de-

heads" of historians and social scientists are anathema to ratings-conscious programmers, and therefore are relegated to PBS. In newspaper writing, it is rare for a reporter to look at the social/historical context of an event in any detail; if that sort of analysis appears at all, it is in opinion columns and editorials. To look too closely at economic process, social

If you are an "American", or, like the Salvadoran priests, have institutional status which somehow makes you like one, your life and death matter more. No one in U.S. public life today willingly admits to being a racist, but isn't this selective moral condemnation evidence that the darker your skin and the less property you own, the less your life matters?

plore it? Perhaps the metaphor of myopia isn't appropriate after all, since it suggests an unavoidable, natural condition, and not the deliberate, cynical official consignment of such atrocities to oblivion.

The news media cooperate in this selective recording of events, of course; since early in this century they have employed a standard of "objective" reporting according to which it is wisest and safest to base stories on official sources, which naturally means that the gerrymandered version of reality created by government officials goes uncriticized. But there also is an economic imperative which leads to a tendency to present "news" as a discontinuous stream of decontextualized images—our mass media are largely based on advertising revenues, and so to please advertisers there is an inherent tendency in reporting (as well as entertainment) to stress the vivid, dramatic, and personal.

On t.v., the "talking

structure, and political conflict—in short, at history—would raise too many troubling questions about "free enterprise" and "democracy" for most reporters, not to mention the purveyors of deodorant and cat food. Beyond the standard references to "El Salvador's ten year-long civil war which has cost the lives of more than 70,000," we learn little of the history which lies behind the present violence, nothing about the opposing groups in the war, their institutions, interests, and bases of support, and certainly nothing about who killed those 70,000 or about the billions in aid the U.S. has provided to those responsible.

A trivial but revealing instance of this avoidance of historical consciousness is worth noting. Since William Walker became U.S. ambassador to El Salvador, I haven't seen or read a single report which remarks on the bitterly comic irony of his name, a name well-known to most Central Americans, since another "Ameri-

can" by that name, a Southern soldier of fortune, led a series of expeditions against Nicaragua in the 1850's with the goal of bringing it into the Union as a slave state. Most U.S. reporters either must not know this history or must feel it "inappropriate" to mention it, but the disturbing continuities in interventionist policy this accident of nomenclature suggests probably aren't lost on many Central Americans.

When one compares the coverage of Central America with that of Eastern Europe some striking differences are evident. First of all, it is clear that the ahistorical tendency just discussed is selective; whereas the involvement of the U.S. in Central America and its massive support for local oligarchies and their militaries is virtually unacknowledged, Soviet imposition of Stalinism on Eastern Europe after the Second World War, sponsorship of ossified regimes, and repression of popular movements for liberalization is reviewed repeatedly in reports on the dramatic changes now occurring. The idea that Eastern Europe is "Russia's" imperial sphere is known to everyone in the U.S. who ever has opened the

Reader's Digest or turned on a tv, but to apply the same model to U.S. relations with Central America, to depict it as an imperial sphere in which the U.S. has selected and promoted only those interests and regimes which suit it and has given them the wherewithal to suppress their opposition (dare I say it?—with even greater brutality than Stalinism has shown in Eastern Europe) is sheerest heresy. The Soviet Union makes the history of the nations of Eastern Europe; what happens in Central America happens, we are to believe, independently of the will of the U.S. government. Indeed, the Reagan and Bush Administrations have gone to great lengths to convince the U.S. public that the source of the region's problems is not indigenous economic/social relations whose oppressive nature has been exacerbated by U.S. intervention, but Soviet subversion. This, it seems to me, constitutes a revision of history worthy of the rulers of Orwell's Oceania.

It is revealing to compare cov-

erage of El Salvador with that of other items in the news at the same time. I was struck by the fact that on many tv stations on November 16th the lead story was not the assassination of the priests in San Salvador but the deaths of seven schoolchildren in a tornado in Newburgh, New York. Certainly this was a terrible event, but ultimately it is one for which very few people, if any, bear responsibility,

The U.S. has given Central American regimes the wherewithal to suppress their opposition with even greater brutality than Stalin in Eastern Europe.

and which it would have been difficult to foresee or prevent. The deaths of the priests, and of hundreds of other people at the same time in San Salvador, however,

were made possible by aid policies which all U.S. citizens pay for, policies which could be stopped or which might never have been begun in the first place. The press followed its usual patterns of diction and referred to the accident as a "tragedy." Most literary theorists follow Aristotle, viewing true tragedy as a disaster caused by vain, arrogant human action, and which thus might be avoided. Whether the word applies to the tornado is debatable, but it surely seems right in reference to what our leaders have chosen to do in El Salvador.

Metaphors help us to draw parallels between things and so are an important means of cognition, although they also can serve to obscure unpleasant facts by creating false analogies. The dominant metaphor used by most reporters to discuss Salvadoran (and virtually all other) politics is a good example, I think, of the manner in which metaphor can limit

Continued on p. 29



John Anner spoke at the El Salvador rally on the Commons. His brother Mark was wounded in the bombing of FENASTRAS in San Salvador. — Eric Patterson Photo —

The Kingpin's New Clothes: President Bush's National Security Complex

Bruce Armstrong

John Stockwell: [Oliver] North was not morally troubled by working with people who were smuggling drugs. He had known for years these people were smuggling drugs. But as you noted, the volume was getting so high that he saw an earthquake coming and actually moved. . .

Frank Morrow: This whole time [during Iran-contragate] George Bush was the supervisor. He was in control of the anti-drug program in the United States— not just the propaganda bit of "Just Say No," but a large and very expensive operation to prohibit drugs and to keep them from coming into the United States. So there is a perfect circle, not only from the propaganda point of view because Bush could be said to be the guy who was keeping it from coming in, but on the covert aspect he could make sure that this stuff came in undetected! . . . The Reagan administration was the most corrupt in the history of the country. They have almost 200 people either indicted or in jail for corruption from that administration.

John Stockwell spent thirteen years in the CIA, directed the CIA secret war in Angola, and is the highest-ranking CIA officer to go public. Frank Morrow hosts "Alternative Views," a public access t.v. show. Excerpted from "Bush, the CIA and the Future" in Z Magazine, Sept., 1989.

The Bush administration's jaw hangs agape at the democratic movements sweeping eastern Europe and Gorbachev's significant and serious disarmament proposals which, if accepted will bode crisis for the U.S. military-industrial complex. Without a 'clear and present threat' of Communism to guide U.S. policy and public opinion, what's to distract people from the misery wrought by ten years of wreckless Conservative profiteering and wholesale selling of the country into imponderable debt in order to fund the largest military buildup in history?

Hail Bush's new and improved "war" on drugs, a good op-

tion for several reasons: first, who can knock it? Public opinion polls rate drug trafficking and abuse as the primary national concern; second, it can be used to rationalize and further various moralistic, self-serving and ulteriorly motivated policies which include beefing up law enforcement through additional cuts in social spending, attacking civil liberties (e.g. with random drug testing, harsher and mandatory prison sentences, the right to search and seizure without a warrant, etc.), and providing a rationale for direct U.S. military involvement abroad, as well as in patrolling our borders.

Bush faces several problems with this war. Beyond his

CIA record and uncertain credibility, the "war" cannot be won given his approach because it lacks sufficient funding and does not address root causes or even consider endorsing gun control legislation. "At best," states Clarence Lusane in the Guardian, the Bush administration's "policies demonstrate a grave misunderstanding of the nature of the drug crisis. At worst they indicate outright complicity in the international illicit drug trade," a growth industry generating billions in profits, hundreds of thousands of jobs and linking almost every nation.

Bush's plan

On September 5 President Bush declared a \$7.8 million war

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

and conservatives alike see fighting drugs as the nation's number-one priority, Bush's battle plan emphasizes law enforcement and attacks on civil liberties over prevention, education and treatment.

The government has been spending around \$4 billion per year in the drug war in recent years with about 75% of the total going for law enforcement and interdiction. While \$7.8 billion looks like a huge jump, Bush's proposal actually represents only \$716 million in new funds to state and local governments. The rest is contained in monies already allocated by Congress.

In order to come up with the \$716 million, Bush plans to cut money from valuable state and federal programs rather than to raise taxes. The cuts will come from juvenile justice assistance programs (many of which operate anti-drug projects and counseling), programs for newly legalized immigrants, economic development grants and public housing subsidies. Only 18 percent of the "new" money is projected to come from a military program (which is not being abolished, but postponed!) In fact, the bulk of the financial burden of Bush's war will

be borne by the states, which, as Drug Czar William Bennett recently pointed out could cost them between \$5 and 10 billion in prison construction together with vast sums for testing, treatment and prevention programs. This of course will push major tax hikes onto the states so that we can continue 'reading Bush's lips' about no new tax increases.

And this does not factor in the ongoing prison crisis. Prisons in the United States already are filled beyond capacity as a result of harsher and mandatory sentencing coupled with cut backs in furlough and probation programs.

The problem is critical

None of this is to suggest that the drug problem is not serious. It is deadly serious and should not be compounded by right wing zealots bent as much on continuing the deliberate, pervasive increase of poverty begun under the Reagan administration as on continuing the economic and political crises facing third world countries, especially in Latin America.

Some of the facts of the matter: worldwide trade in illegal narcotics is a \$500 billion industry (*Fortune* magazine); The U.S. is

experiencing the worst illegal drug epidemic in our history with an estimated consumption of \$150 billion worth a year; with 6% of the world's population, the U.S. consumes 70% of the illegal drugs; roughly 11% of all U.S. newborns are exposed to illegal drugs; while whites constitute 76% of all illegal drug users in the U.S., 90% of those arrested and committed to prison are people of color; expenditures for law enforcement have risen at a rate four times greater than those for education; twice as many men and women are locked up in America as in 1981 and the Federal Bureau of Prisons recently announced plans to build 20,000 new prisons in the next 15 years;

The solution is building communities, not destroying them Bush stated in his speech that "we already have the basic weapons we need" to win the war on drugs. Militarist language aside, this nation does have the ability to overcome the drug crisis. But the solutions lie in promoting the development of communities filled with hope as well as in meeting public demands for living wages, decent and affordable housing, good education, etc. What's wrong

— (continued) —



The War in Colombia

Veronica Bleuzé

In recent months, President Bush has committed at least \$355 million in funds and military equipment to Colombia as part of the "war on drugs." In addition, an unspecified number of US military advisors and Drug Enforcement Agency agents are providing "technical assistance" to the Colombian government supposedly as part of the Bush Administration's anti-drug strategy.

But human rights groups such as Amnesty International and the Colombia Human Rights Committee have recently called attention to the fact that the recent crackdown in Colombia, funded by the Bush Administration, has been aimed not only at the drug traffickers but also at the political opposition, the labor movement, and other grassroots popular organizations. US officials have admitted that there is no guarantee that U.S. funds and equipment will actually be used solely to fight drug traffickers. In fact, the aid is being channelled through Colombia's Ministry of Defense which has connections with paramilitary death squads who have been responsible for murdering, kidnapping and torturing members of the political opposition. These paramilitary death squads consist of a far-right alliance among drug traffickers, sectors of the military and police, large landowners, and rightist politicians.

Many human rights activists in Colombia suspect that the August 18th assassination of the Liberal Party presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galan was the work of this paramilitary alliance, not just the work of the drug traffickers as has been widely publicized. Galan's rival, Sen. Hernando Duran Duason, had just won the endorsement of the newly formed National Restoration Movement, the political arm of the drug trafficker-landowning-paramilitary alliance.

Various aspects of Colombian President Barco's recent crackdown provide further evidence that the "war on drugs" is being used as a means to crack down on the political opposition. As part of this latest crackdown, Barco issued 13 new decrees that were aimed more at repressing social and political activists than at combatting the drug traffickers. Barco tried to replace popularly-elected mayors with members of the military but this created such a scandal that he was unable to carry out the plan. Also the military has not attacked the Puerto Boyaca area, the paramilitary squads' principal base of operations; they have not dismantled any of the training schools for assassins run by the paramilitaries in conjunction with the drug traffickers; and Barco has refused to discuss the paramilitary question.

Human rights activists in Colombia have asked that U.S. military aid to Colombia be halted at least until the military purges officers responsible for kidnapping, torture, and murder of the civilian population.

Kingpin, continued

with Bush's picture? (is he a "kinder, gentler" fascist?).

U.S Wages Separate but Equal Drug Wars in Latin America

Dr. Louis "Jolly" West, who conducted drug experiments for the CIA during the sixties has stated that "the total or partial prohibition of drugs gives government considerable leverage for other types of control." Combine this idea with the fact that most Americans are either misinformed or totally ignorant -or both- about Latin American affairs and you have a good cover for overt military action in the region. Whether or not they are actually involved in illicit drug production, drug eradication can be the pretext for putting down a workers movement in Bolivia or Colombia [see sidebar], a guerilla movement in Peru, or even to bring down a drug kingpin government in Panama.

As with its domestic "war", the administration's Latin American actions denote a misconstrued notion of the realities and needs of Latin America. Rather than pressuring governments to initiate needed economic reforms (it would require reducing some of their debt, which certainly isn't high on Bush's agenda), the U.S. sends Drug Enforcement Agency agents into various countries to train paramilitary forces in drug eradication techniques, all with little visible effect on drug production.

A March, 1988 Government Accounting Office report, U.S. Narcotics Control Activities, concluded: "Despite increased U.S. assistance to cooperating countries' crop control and law enforcement efforts and increased eradication, narcotics production remains at high levels and supplies available to the United

States remain plentiful."

The clearest pattern to emerge from a survey of DEA involvement in Latin America is that rather than impeding the flood of drugs, the agency's efforts serve more to provide the U.S. military with opportunities to practice low-intensity conflict maneuvers ("Drug Wars and the Environment: A Troubling Pattern," Earth Island Journal, 6/88).

The situation in Bolivia is especially troubling. The "war on drugs" has provided the main justification for the U.S. military build-up in Bolivia. The U.S. committed combat forces beginning in 1986 with a ten week intervention known as "Operation Blast Furnace," which had the stated intention of wiping out coca production in one region. While the U.S. helicopters and soldiers that swooped down on the Bolivian towns and villages did little to affect drug supplies and prices, they did generate a legacy of bitter feelings in the region.

More recently, eradication operations have been carried out by the Drug Enforcement Agency. The DEA, for example, was in direct command of Bolivia's Mobile Rural Patrol (UMOPAR) when it attacked the town of Santa Ana, Beni last August, allegedly in pursuit of a cocaine trafficker. Five people were killed and several others wounded when the townspeople and resident military authorities resisted the arbitrary violence of the Umopar incursion. No "narcotrafficker" was among them. Following a separate Umopar attack on the town in September, in which helicopters bombed local access roads and damaged homes and livestock in the town, peasant leader Edilberto Arispe declared, "Umopar's crimes — continued. on p. 30 —"

Wars of Two Cities

WASHINGTON, DC

by Joyce Hollyday

The values observed on the streets bear a remarkable resemblance to the way this nation conducts its foreign policy. And if the rules of the drug dealers' game indeed do not reflect traditional American values, why do these same values assault our children daily from movie screens and television sets? Why is it that everything from television commercials to college courses teach that acquisition of money and possessions is the primary sign of status and success in this country? and why is it that developers who evict the poor from neighborhoods such as mine and make millions on real estate deals are applauded as shrewd capitalists instead of convicted as criminals?

I live in what is, according to one observer, "the most murderous city in the most murderous nation in the world." I am tired of hearing the sirens and watching the terrorized faces; of seeing families put out of their homes and watching young friends, unable to resist the overwhelming pull of drugs, wind up broken and lost — or dead. And I am tired of people talking about the "roots of violence" without talking about unemployment and poverty and substandard education — and the fact that this city and this nation by their policies and priorities have in fact consigned some of the people in my neighborhood to death.

So far the answers to this

MEDELLIN, COLOMBIA

by Geoffrey Matthews

Manrique is the oldest, toughest, most legendary working-class quarter of Medellin, Colombia's second city. In Latin American cities there is always a district like Manrique, marking a frontier between the haves and have-nots. Just north of the bustling city center, Manrique signals the demarcation line between the beauty and relative prosperity of what is still, miraculously, one of South America's most attractive, well-run provincial cities and a vast urban no man's land ranging from dangerous mean streets to shantytowns perched perilously on steep hillsides.

From Manrique has sprung a terrifying phenomenon variously known as the killing machines, guns for hire, contract killers, or — in the trade's own jargon — "dispatchers" of "packages" to a "definitive goodbye." Medellin has the world's highest homicide rate: more than 4,000 murders last year in a population of 2.5 million.

This phenomenon was created by the Medellin drug cartel, said to control about 80 percent of the world's cocaine business, in its war against the Colombian government. For the cartel, the hoodlums had several virtues. Their folk heroes were the top mafiosi; their services came cheap; and they were expendable. The first baby-faced assassins, a decade ago, were chosen for their almost Olympic abilities to shoot moving targets. Subsequent generations of gunmen rode on souped-up motorcycles, weaving their way

— BOTH CONTINUE —

The US Media: Most Things Ignored

Paul McMillin

In the US press, Colombia has become known over the last two years as the land of drug lords, vicious leftist guerrillas, and that darksome combination of evils, the narcoguerrilla. Now, providing the counterbalance, the forces of good are on the scene: US agencies, in coordination with the Colombian government and military, are attempting to root out the druglords and their leftist allies-in-the-field, in the congressionally popular drug war.

Meanwhile, the real war in Colombia, the counterinsurgency war, receives little mention. In every major daily, several stories each week describe in detail drug cartel killings and coke busts. But the greater number of army and

death squad murders of guerrillas and civilians alike are rarely reported.

Locally and nationally, the mainstream press, with rare exception, has done more to distort than to clarify our understanding of Colombian politics.

THE ITHACA JOURNAL

Page seven of the Oct. 11 Ithaca Journal provides a nice example of the way our media images Colombia. The lead article, with a bold headline and two AP photos, read "Drug cartel admits killing two at paper." Also on page 7 was a smaller article, with a lighter, smaller headline, and no photos of the dead, titled "Amnesty: 2,500 slain in 17 months." The lesser



story goes like this: "Colombian police and soldiers, working sometimes in concert with drug traffickers and paramilitary groups, have illegally killed 2,500 people in 17 months, Amnesty International said today. An additional 250 victims disappeared after being taken into custody in 1988 and the first five months of this year, and some were tortured while being held, the international human rights group said in a report... Victims have included trade union leaders, human rights workers, teachers, priests, peasants and, more recently, members of the judiciary trying to investigate rights abuses, it said."

The lead story was only one of several earlier Journal articles reporting on the killings of journalists, judges and politicians attributed to drug cartels in Colombia. The lesser story, however, was not preceded by a series of related articles. Despite some 2500 chances in the last year and a half, the Journal has rarely, if ever, carried a report on Colombian military and police abuses.

(Washington cont.)

erotic— which is engulfing not only neighborhoods of Washington, D.C., but also other cities across the nation—amount to a "war on drugs," matching force with force. Add more police officers, give them six-day work weeks, and issue them semi-automatic weapons; build more and bigger prisons, and federalize the police or send in the National Guard to patrol the streets. . . . The problem in this country is that too many people are putting the values of greed and might into a "civilized mode."

Joyce Kalliday, excerpt from *Soljourner's magazine*, June 1989

(Medellin cont.)

through heavy traffic to shoot sitting targets . . .

After carrying out a lucrative contract, the killers often pay for a special Mass to give thanks at the same time the victim's funeral Mass is taking place elsewhere. "They find no contradiction between their beliefs and their activity, which they regard as a job and nothing more," says a local academic. . . . They spurn brothels and pool halls, do not drink or use drugs, and keep in peak condition. Their career span is short, starting at 15, burnt-out—or dead—by 25.

Geoffrey Matthews, excerpt from *World Press Review*, November, 1989

The National Press

The Journal is, to be fair, reliant on a limited number of sources (one, to be exact) for its international news. But the bias on Colombia evident in our only Ithaca daily is easily matched in the major national dailies. In August of this year, there were at least 70 articles in the mainstream press (here including the New York Times (NYT), Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor (CSM), Boston Globe, and the Miami Herald) concerning violence in Colombia. Nearly all reported on killings attributed to the drug cartels. Nearly all the victims were described as crusaders in the anti-drug campaign. There were only two significant articles highlighting military/police attacks against the popular sectors: both were op-ed pieces by groups deeply involved in Latin America work.

Press conformity with the interests of the US State Department was so great that only three of the 60 plus news articles could have been read as being even slightly critical of the US-sponsored drug war in Colombia: one suggesting that the US was administering the war incompetently; one stressing that Israel still officially supports the drug war despite the well-established reports of retired Israeli military personnel advising the drug cartel's paramilitary forces; and one reporting that the drug cartels are using American-made guns.

In the past year and half, the time in which Amnesty has documented over 2500 military/police killings, the same pattern holds true. The hundreds of mainstream reports on killings attributed to drug cartels overwhelm the handful on these political murders and most of the latter concerned only the two largest massacres, and

were printed after the fact as overviews of the Colombian situation, not as current news.

The New York Times vs. Amnesty International

Two possible exceptions to this rule were the reports in the NYT and CSM on the Segovia massacre of Nov. 11, in which 43 people were killed. Both papers published short pieces within days of the killings. Both, however, got the story dead wrong.

Here's an excerpt from the Amnesty report, now generally accepted as an accurate description of the massacre: "Fifteen heavily armed men . . . opened fire on people in the streets. Grenades were thrown into bars and the church and one group of assailants went from house to house searching for political opposition and union leaders. A bus was intercepted close to the military battalion 'Bombona,' based just outside the town and several passengers were killed. The regular garrisons of police and military stood by while the gunmen moved freely through the town for over an hour . . . Not only [did] the armed forces fail to intervene, but army and police personnel, including the battalion commander, directly participated in the preparation of the massacre. Forty-three people, including three children, were killed."

The NYT, however, reported it this way: "Colombian guerillas,

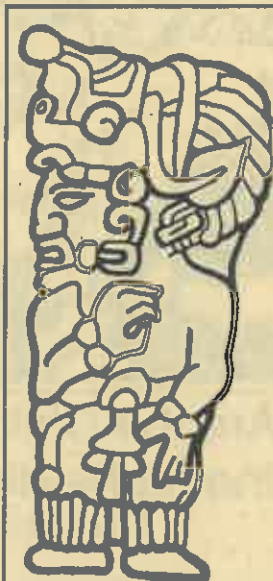
firing on anything that moved, killed 42 civilians and wounded 57 in an attack on the northern mining town of Segovia, military authorities said. It was an indiscriminate attack on the population, whatever its age or sex . . . they were just intent on sowing blood, terror"

The CSM report (Nov. 14), paying closer attention to detail, added the useful information that the killers were the pro-Moscow Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia and the pro-Cuban National Liberation Army. Although the CSM included the rebels' denial of participation, and both

reports honestly cited the Colombian military as their source, neither report noted the absurdity of the military's claims, an absurdity easily demonstrated by a quick look at the current situation in Segovia in particular, and in Colombia in general:

Segovia in particular: Se-

govia is a left town, with the Communist Party-affiliated Patriotic Union holding the mayoralty and many council positions. Many of those killed in the massacre were UP members, adding to the hundreds of UP members already assassinated in the last couple of years. Police threats against local leftists had been common prior to the attack, as had anti-communist death squad graffiti. Although the only road into Segovia, passes a major military base, the attackers did not meet resistance either on the way in, or, after more than



half-an-hour of shooting, on the way out.

Colombia in general: The CSM itself, in a follow-up report on Segovia and other massacres, presents one of the main reasons that any news organization even vaguely familiar with the political situation in Colombia should not defer to military authorities as their single source on major massacres: "In October of last year, Colombia's Interior Minister, Cesar Gaviria Trujillo, gave the Colombian congress a list document-

ing the names and areas of operation of 137 paramilitary groups. Since then, however, although the police and military have efficiently confronted dozens of attacks by leftist guerrilla groups, the authorities have never entered into combat with the death squads." (Nov. 21, 1988).

End note: On Aug. 30, the LA-Times reported that a 48-minute color videotape prepared by the Israelis clearly showed "experienced Israeli instructors" training

private military units, in the presence of a leader of the Medellin drug cartel. The story was also picked up by most other major dailies. Not noted in the mainstream press, however, is that the Colombian intelligence report which initially fingered the Israeli advisors, also fingered British and US advisors.



These Are the Children of Sandino : Faces the US Media Will Not Behold

María Veronica Frenkel

Like most who have lived and traveled in revolutionary Nicaragua, I am continually shocked at the discrepancy between what I perceive as Nicaragua's reality and the way it is often portrayed in the U.S. press and by both the Reagan and Bush administrations. Thus, on the tenth anniversary of their Revolution,

I felt it important to share some of my own personal experiences of the country and its people. Each of the five stories are examples of many of my everyday encounters with Nicaraguans while I lived there between 1986 and 1988. Neither the meetings nor the discussions were planned; thus, the words I quote should not be construed as "Sandinista propaganda" efforts. I hope that these brief and simple stories might provide insights which go beyond many of the highly ideological interpretations of Revolutionary Nicaragua and provide a glimpse of the faces and

the spirits behind the revolutionary struggle.

The Farmer

We are on top of a hill of corn with the sun setting behind us, casting its long shadows on the emerald field. The scenic town of Matagalpa lies cradled in the valley below us in the distance. Guillermo, a Nicaraguan who owns a sizeable plot of land on which he grows coffee for export and corn for domestic consumption, stands on a boulder as if giving a speech on a stage, a bottle of *Flor de Caña* (Nicaraguan rum) in his hand and his German shepherd at his side. After kindly picking us up while hitchhiking to Jinotega, he had invited us to visit his farm and see, as he put it, "something good about Nicaragua." While walking through the sea of green, he tells me how important it is that we know his views as a private

landowner about the government and the current revolutionary situation. During his long discourse, he stresses that not only was the revolutionary government NOT restricting him from producing or earning a profit, but that it instead was encouraging him to produce. Through low-cost provisions of farm supplies and improved access to credit, he gets a good return for his crop. Despite the fact that some of his land was taken from him and turned over to a cooperative after the revolution, he says, "I am satisfied, and I have no problems with the government because I produce efficiently and treat my workers well." "If the government is Marxist," he adds, "then they must be 'flexible Marxists' because amidst many social and economic changes, I still own my land and make a profit, as do many others."

The Police

Getting mugged in Managua is not a common incident. The streets are

generally safer than any in Central America. So when we walked into the Police Station one night to announce that our purses had been snatched, it came as a great surprise to the police. We, too, were surprised by the friendly, informal, even boyish demeanor of the police on duty that night. After sending out a "posse" on bicycles to scope out the area, three of them took us in a jeep on a wild search through the city's discos. The three who accompanied us laughed, joked, and chatted with us, at times making us forget that we were out on a "manhunt." The process of filling out the huge number of forms and of taking our "statements" exemplified the immense paperwork and bureaucracy that characterizes many of Nicaragua's institutions. Bureaucracy, inefficiency, and fun aside, the police eventually caught the muggers, thanks to the incredible network of police volunteers in the neighborhood and the close relationship between the police and the community which they serve. We witnessed the genuine concern and sympathy on the part of the police towards our young, confused, and economically poor attackers after they were caught. The punishment given to our 16-year old assailant? He was forced to undergo the psychological "torture" of meeting his "victims," getting to know them, and suffering so much of a guilty conscience that we are sure he would think twice before committing a robbery again. He was also required to participate in a community service project

to repair the local schoolhouse in his poor neighborhood. As one of the policemen told me, "We are not concerned with filling our jails with *chavalos* from poor or broken homes who are a bit disoriented and don't really know what they are doing. We hope that they learn from their experience and and try to find ways in which they feel they can be more useful contributors to their communities and societies." Utopian, perhaps, but an alternative definitely worth trying.



The Women's Cabildo

Dora María is a small, elderly campesina who has lost both of her sons in the war against the contras. She has traveled all the way from San Juan de Limay to Managua to participate in the Women's cabildo abierto, an open meeting to discuss Nicaragua's new Constitution. Much ignored by the U.S. and the Reagan

Administration, the building of the new Constitution in 1986 was a time-consuming, yet important part of many Nicaraguan's lives. All totalled, there were over 100 cabildos, which allowed Nicaraguans from all walks of life to criticize and discuss the first draft of the Constitution. The Women's cabildo had the highest attendance of any other meeting, an amazing gathering of hundreds of female peasants, students, teachers, workers, Miskito Indians, and others. Dora María comes forth wearing the military hat of one of her sons. Despite her weariness from her journey, she seems energized by the atmosphere of discussion and debate and is by no means shy in front of so many others. With her fists raised high in the air, showing none of the fear one would expect in confronting one of the supposedly "totalitarian" Comandantes, Carlos Nuñez, head of the National Assembly, she demands that the Constitution contain a clause recognizing the "heroes and martyrs," like her two sons, who have died fighting the U.S.-sponsored "contras." Following her lead, many more women stand up to speak both critically and positively about the Constitution, in what has to surely be one of the most innovative and participatory Constitution-building processes in the Americas.

The Bishop's Chauffeur

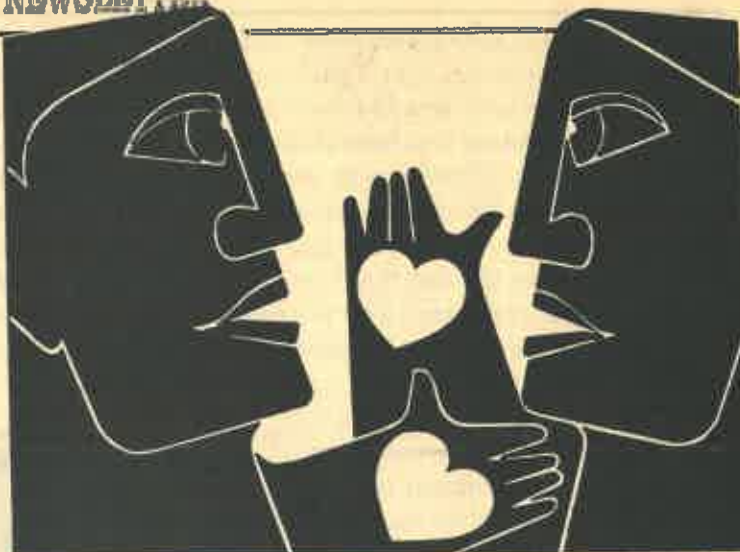
Enrique crosses himself whenever he passes a church. A deeply religious man, we ask him how he feels about the conflictual relationship between the

Nicaraguan Catholic hierarchy and the Sandinista government. Words don't come easy. For Enrique, a one time chauffeur for Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the difficult decision to disassociate himself from the Catholic hierarchy marked a critical turning point in his life. He remembers the Somoza years with sorrow and dread; Somoza's national guard beat him with rifle butts and left him bleeding in a jail cell for ten days. He knows that many other innocents never survived such run-ins with the national guard and crosses himself again. "How can I maintain loyalty to Obando, even though he supposedly leads our church, when he supports the people who did that to me and to thousands of other Nicaraguans," Enrique says. Like thousands of other Nicaraguans, Enrique has had to confront the dilemma of how to reconcile his faith and the unpopular stance of the Catholic hierarchy. He, like many others, now chooses to participate in the "popular" church which supports the Revolution by leading bible study and consciousness-raising groups in the evenings.

The Souvenir

Rosario's eyes reflect her pain and suffering. A child hangs on to her leg and observes the hundreds of other children gathered in the school courtyard. We are in the northern town of Jinotega, where the local branch of the Sandinista Party is holding a party for war orphans. The President, Daniel Ortega, is scheduled to arrive shortly; but the kids are naturally much more concerned with the piñatas and games. Knowing the tragedy and sadness that so many of these children and their surviving relatives have experienced, their festive and joyful mood seems bittersweet. Rosario hands us a white dove made of paper and cotton. "Pan Sí, Balas No," bread yes, bullets no, says a tag hanging round its neck. "Take this dove home with you," she says; "and tell your country that we want peace. Tell your people that they (the contras) killed my son; tell your people that they paid for the death of my son." With tears in her eyes, she hugs us, and turns to play with the children.

Verónica Frenkel is a Graduate Student in Government at Cornell University. She lived in Nicaragua between 1986 and 1988, working as an advisor to the Nicaraguan Food Program (PAN) and the Nicaraguan Union of Farmers and Ranchers (UNAG).



Quilalí-Ithaca Area Sister City Project Established

John Ewing

The Quilalí-Ithaca Area Sister City Project plans to formalize a sister city relationship with Quilalí, Nicaragua early next year. Quilalí, a community of about 8,000 is located in Northwestern Nicaragua, close to the Honduran border. Two thirds of the population is under 15 years of age. As Quilalí is situated in the mountains, the climate is cool and temperate. 91 percent of the community is organized into cooperatives, and most people are agricultural laborers. The land is among the most fertile in Nicaragua, but because of contra activity, much of it goes unfarmed.

Last January, eight Ithacans spent a month there building a two room addition onto a schoolhouse.

Projects:

Quilalí is badly in need of a water supply system that can distribute water to all the people in the town and can filter the water as well. The public school needs playground equipment and school materials. The doctor in Quilalí is very enthusiastic about health care volunteers coming to work in the clinic. The mayor's wife is regional director of AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan women's organization, providing good opportunities for networking. The Nica School, two and a half hours from Quilalí, provides opportunities for North Americans to study Spanish and live with Nicaraguan families.

Presently, committees are being formed. These include: Public relations/education; Communication with Quilalí; and fundraising.

If you have any questions, or would like to get involved, please call Kathy Yoselson at 273-8025 or CUSLAR (255-7293)

NICARAGUA UPDATE:

THE U.S. WAR CONTINUES DESPITE REGIONAL PEACE INITIATIVES

Janice Degni

Daniel Ortega's announcement to end the Nicaraguan uni-lateral ceasefire on October 27 caused an uproar in Washington and immediately brought Nicaragua back to the forefront of the national media. The backlash against Ortega recalled the misinformation and outright lies initiated during the Reagan years with a bit of Bush's own racism.

The fact that the president and the press painted Ortega as the villain for no longer sustaining the ceasefire is ludicrous, especially given their silence when the contras walked out of peace negotiations in June of 1988, 16 months earlier.

Contra attacks had been on the rise in October and many were directed against the electoral process. Around October 8, the contras staged a 15 minute attack to disrupt voter registration in Jinotega. A peace commission member was kidnapped. On October 18, several sites in Matagalpa, Jinotega and Chontales were unable to open due to attacks by contras in those areas.

On October 21, the contras killed 19 reservists and injured 6 others while they were on their way to register to vote. The contras had planted a land mine in the road and machine gunned the reservists as they tried to escape from their vehicle. This was after the Sandinistas had moved the registration site, in response to

complaints by representatives of UNO, that it was too close to the army barracks (1). (Daniel Ortega gives his reasons for ending the ceasefire in an op-ed entitled "Why



photo by Sarah Moser
CUSLAR organizes a picket outside of contra talk, challenging the deadly fabrications of the the contra propagandists

I Ended the Cease-Fire" in the November 2 New York Times. He writes, "We do not consider it a ceasefire when we cease and the Contra fire").

Our Congressional Representatives lost no time in passing a resolution condemning Ortega's action to end the ceasefire (S. Con. Res 79). [see box on p. 23]

The wording is harsh and downplays the atrocities committed by the contras. It repudiates the "gentleman's agreement" made in the Spring between Secretary of State Baker and the Congress to cutoff aid to the contras by November 30 if they continued to carry out military offensives. The condemnation demonstrates the extent to which our representatives perpetuate the disinformation that surrounds Nicaragua. The House resolution was not worded nearly as harshly and was voted down.

It is necessary to respond to some of the criticisms leveled against the Sandinistas in the resolution. Much of what it is based on (included in the whereas statements) is not accurate. Their insistence that Ortega reestablish the uni-lateral ceasefire while not

calling on the contras to observe it is ridiculous and unreasonable. The rhetoric of the condemnation reinforces the idea of "fledgling democracies" in the region, implying

that Nicaragua is the odd one out. The U.S. government insists on portraying Guatemala and El Salvador as the vulnerable, young democracies of Central American when in many circles people refer to El

Salvador as a death squad government and in Guatemala we are seeing human rights abuses which are approaching the appalling levels of the early eighties.

In various places the tone of the resolution implies that the Nicaraguan government is not committed to the February elections and is trying to undermine them. In fact, Nicaragua has progressive electoral laws. Fifty percent of foreign donations to political parties go to the intended party while the other half goes to the Supreme Electoral Council to support the electoral process in general. All legally registered parties are offered free and equal access to the state television and radio. The resolution also implies that the Sandinistas have not carried out the agreements they made as part of the Central America Peace process. The agreements made in February of 1989 included moving up the date of the elections from November 1990 to February 25, 1990, reform of the electoral and media laws, freeing the remaining National Guard prisoners and holding free and fair elections with international observation. In fact more than 100 ex-guardsmen, all

but 39, have been released.

International observers report that things are moving along smoothly in the electoral process. Former U.S Attorney General Elliot Richardson, now heading a United Nations observer team, has told reporters that a great deal has been done to guarantee free and fair elections in Nicaragua and that he hopes the U.N. observer team will help draw international attention to the credibility of the electoral process (2). Additionally, during negotiations in October the Nicaraguan government offered to ask the Supreme Electoral Council to allow any ex-contras to be allowed to register to vote after demobilization. The representatives of the contras have since broken off negotiations.

The Bush strategy to remove Central America and particularly Nicaragua, from the media, with the intention of stifling the voices of opposition from within the U.S. has been jarred recently. Before Ortega's decision to end the ceasefire U.S.

policy was progressing smoothly. Substantial aid to the contras had been approved and public outcry was not hindering the progress of overtly and covertly influencing the elections.

The peace process, initiated by the five presidents of the region, calls for the demobilization of the contras by December 8. The U.S. government chose to subvert

this plan and proceeded to approve \$52 million to keep the contras together as a fighting force under the much celebrated guise of bipartisanship. If the contras remained as a viable fighting force, it was reasoned, it would provide the pressure necessary to insure that the Sandinistas held "free and fair" elections in February, 1990. It seems that the U.S. government's definition of "free and fair elections" is subject to change at its convenience. Apparently providing \$17 million (3) to the opposition par-



ties in an impoverished country, while breaking the spirit of our own electoral laws and illegally channeling the money to those parties is not expected to affect the fairness of their elections

A national legislative campaign calling for the cutoff of the remainder of the 52 million dollars approved this past April was run November 16-18. Locally, CUSLAR tabled at two student unions on the Cornell campus and at the DeWitt Mall downtown. Letter writing and petition-signing were encouraged. We had little hope of actually affect-

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Jan 4-Jan 27

Reconstruction
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Apr 8-May 5

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Jul 29-Aug 25

Current brigade cost: \$450 plus travel.

Contact:



Nicaragua Network

2025 I St., NW, # 212, Washington, DC 20006
(202) 223-2328 • HOTLINE (202) 223-NICA

*Environmental brigades co-sponsored with EPOCA (The Environmental Project on Central America)

ing congressional policy because of the statement in the Senate Resolution that vowed to keep the aid flowing to the contras until after the February elections. Nevertheless, it is essential that we maintain pressure on Congress and keep them aware that we do not support the U.S. aggression against Nicaragua in any form, be it military, economic or political. We must constantly remind them of our opposition to the contras, the embargo, and to the continued meddling in the internal affairs of Nicaragua. It is important that we do not forget about the crisis in Nicaragua even as the war and oppression in El Salvador push to the

forefront of world attention.

1. personal communication with Thomas Walker, Prof. of Political Science University of Ohio, member of the LASA election observer team.

2. The Voz Summary, October 17-31, 1989.

3. The House approved \$9 million - \$8 million will go to opposition parties, \$3.5 M had been previously appropriated by Congress and at least \$5 million had been approved for the CIA for covert actions. On a per capita basis, \$17 million in Nicaragua would be similar to a foreign aggressor giving \$1.5 billion to the 1988 Dukakis campaign.

Ask Not What Thy Government Doeth in Thy Name...

Sen. Con. Resolution 79

Whereas, a ceasefire has been in effect in Nicaragua for eighteen months;

Whereas, although there have been periodic violent incidents, and accusations of violations of the ceasefire by each side against the other, there has been no major, widespread breakdown in the ceasefire to date;

Whereas, United States policy has been to discourage the Contras from undertaking any offensive military actions and we have withheld American aid from Contra units which have initiated such actions;

Whereas, Ortega's announcement was made at a hemispheric meeting held in Costa Rica to celebrate democracy in the region-another instance in which Ortega and other Sandinistas leaders have shown disregard for their democratic neighbors and their own commitments;

Whereas, many of the democratic leaders of the hemisphere, including Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, have already denounced Ortega's announcement;

Whereas, despite incidents of Sandinista intimidation and harassment, and the fact that the voter registration period was limited to four Sundays in October, nearly two million Nicaraguans registered to vote in the February 1990 elections; and

Whereas, in the Bipartisan Accord on Nicaragua and Public Law 101-14, the Congress indicated its intention to provide humanitarian assistance to the Contras until after the February 1990 elections; Now, therefore, be it resolved by the Senate (*the House of Representatives concurring*), that the Congress-

- (1) condemns Daniel Ortega's announced intention to abrogate the ceasefire they originally declared in Nicaragua as totally unjustified, a major breach of the Sandinista regime's commitments to its democratic neighbors and its own people, and a serious threat to regional peace and stability;
- (2) calls on Daniel Ortega to cease his reckless rhetoric, and to begin to fulfill the many commitments he and his regime have made to end their aggression in the region, end the tyranny over their own people and permit the establishment of democracy inside Nicaragua,
- (3) urges the Sandinistas to renew their commitment to continuing the ceasefire now in effect;
- (4) insists that Ortega and the Sandinistas reaffirm their pledge to hold elections on February 25, 1990, and to begin to carry out in good faith their commitment to a free and fair electoral process leading up to those elections;
- (5) deploras any effort by the Sandinista regime to terminate, postpone or curtail the limited progress they have made to date in fulfilling their commitment to a free and fair electoral process or to impose emergency laws, under the phony pretext of a major Contra-initiated breakdown of the ceasefire;
- (6) strongly urges the extension of the period during which Nicaraguans are permitted to register to vote for at least sixty days;
- (7) reaffirms its intention to abide by the provision of the Bipartisan Accord on Nicaragua and Public Law 101-14, to include continuing the provide humanitarian assistance to the Contras until February 28, 1990; and
- (8) reminds Ortega, the Sandinista regime, and the other leaders of the hemisphere that United States policy articulated in the Bipartisan Accord on Nicaragua and Public Law 101-14 is contingent on the Sandinistas fulfilling the commitments they have undertaken as part of the Central American peace process.

EL SALVADOR

**Eric Patterson
and Bruce Armstrong;**
supported by members
of the Hobart/William
Smith Colleges faculty.

We urge you to contact your representatives and the Bush Administration concerning continuing human rights abuses by the government of El Salvador. Since the inauguration of Alfredo Christiani in June, more than four hundred civilians have been killed by Salvadoran government forces and many more have been abducted, tortured, and imprisoned. The human rights office of the Catholic Church in El Salvador reports that virtually every woman abducted is raped. In its attempt to stop the recent insurgent offensive, the government has resorted to attacking residential areas, particularly the poorest neighborhoods where support for the insurgents is strong, with U.S.-supplied helicopters, C-47 gunships, and A-37 fighter-bombers. (Ithaca Journal, 15 Nov.) According to officials of the Lutheran Church, white phosphorus bombs have been used against these civilian areas.

On November 16th, two days after he had called upon the government to recognize and negotiate with the insurgents, Father Ignacio Ellacuria, the rector of the University of Central America and a distinguished scholar, was tortured and assassinated. Five other Jesuit priests were killed along with him, including the vice-rector of the university and the director of the Institute of Human

Rights. Father Ellacuria's housekeeper and her daughter, who had sought refuge in his residence, were murdered as well.

According to members of the Jesuit order, there is substantial evidence, despite official denials, that government forces were re-



sponsible. (New York Times, 17 Nov.) This view is shared by Robert White, ambassador to El Salvador under President Carter, who commented that "the Salvadoran military looks on this [the recent fighting] as a heaven-sent opportunity, not only to wipe out the insurgents,... but to go after priests, labor union leaders, campesino organizers, and the poor people in general who favor change..." (National Public Radio, 16 Nov.)

The Bush Administration was alarmed by the strength of the FMLN offensive and stepped up its arms shipments to the Salvadoran military. The decision to send U.S. special forces to "rescue" U.S. advisors trapped by combat in a San Salvador hotel is an ominous indication of the administration's willingness to deepen direct U.S.

involvement.

The administration also launched an offensive on the propaganda front, alleging that arms shipments from Nicaragua were found among the wreckage of one plane, and had been removed from another. The incident was used to divert media attention from Salvadoran government atrocities, and to back up assertions that the FMLN is backed by foreign powers. Falsifying evidence to justify stepped-up military aid is a common practice of successive U.S. administrations, but as former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White commented, "No competent observer doubts that the Salvadoran revolution is homegrown and enjoys wide popular support." (CISPES letter, Dec. 1)

Since 1980 Salvadoran military forces have killed more than 70,000 people, most of them unarmed civilians (New York Times, 20 Nov.) The United States continues to supply \$1.5 million dollars in aid per day to the Salvadoran government (CISPES figure). We believe that our government should end such support and encourage a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement of the Salvadoran civil war. There is growing concern about this issue in Congress, and so there may be opportunities to start such a new approach.

HOW YOU CAN HELP.

"The popular uprising in El Salvador has brought the Salvadoran people to the verge of ridding themselves of the ARENA

government and realizing at long last, peace and a real democracy." (CISPES letter, Dec. 1) If you are concerned about continued U.S. support for the government of El Salvador, CISPES (the Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador) is seeking to raise \$100,000 in material aid to El Salvador during December to support several projects. These include:

1. The "Bravo Fund," a humanitarian aid project sponsored by the US-El Salvador Institute for Democratic Development, is seeking support for the construction of FMLN Emergency Mobile Hospital units to provide treatment to injured civilians, FMLN members, and government soldiers. Make checks payable to "The Bravo Fund" and send to The Bravo Fund, P.O. Box 460586, San Francisco, CA 94146 (415) 863-8659

2. NEST (New El Salvador Today) is sending money to war-damaged neighborhoods for food and medicine. Checks may be mailed to the CISPES National Office, P.O. Box 12056, Washing-

ton D.C. 20005.

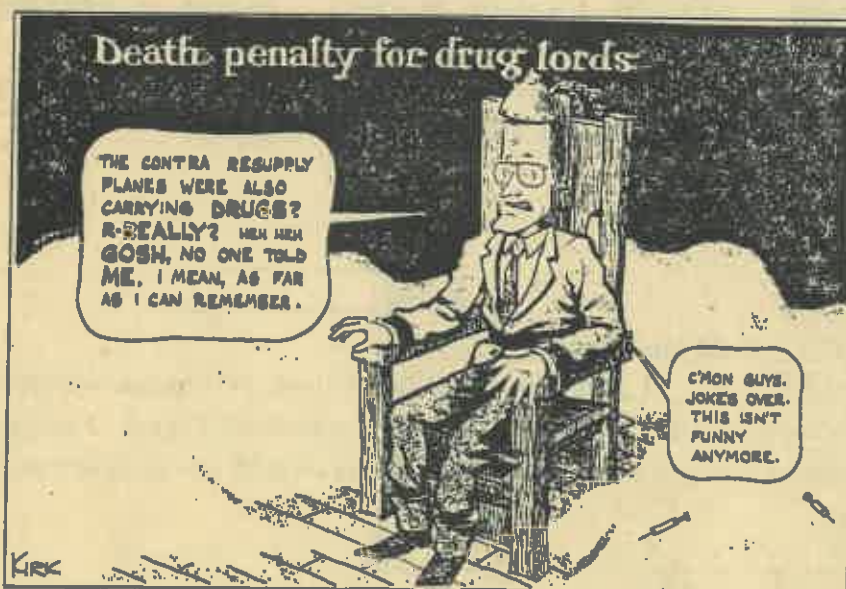
3. SHARE (Salvadoran Humanitarian Aid, Research and Education) is sending money for blood, blankets and food via the Archdiocese of San Salvador and DIACONIA, an ecumenical aid organization. Checks may be sent to SHARE-Emergency, Box 16 - Cardinal Station, Washington, DC. 20064.

Send Christmas cards to the following:

William Paxon
31st District
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Alfonse D'Amato
U.S. Senate
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Daniel Moynihan
U.S. Senate
Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515



Join CUSLAR's Rapid Response Network

ANN PETERS

Over the past two years, CUSLAR has developed its capability to respond quickly to human rights alerts that come into the office through phone calls or in the mail. We have developed a Telex bank with over 80 contributors, individuals who pledge to pay for a given number of telexes each year (we currently have 200 authorizations to send telexes). We send telexes in the name of five of those people whenever we receive news that someone has been arrested or "disappeared", and they receive a copy of the message sent in their name together with a bill from the telex service we use.

We receive Rapid Response alerts from a wide variety of sources. Many work in Central America, such as NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with the People

of Guatemala), FINDING (Free Individuals Disappeared in Guatemala), Peace Brigades International, CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), CoMadres (Committee of Mothers of the disappeared, El Salvador), and Witness for Peace, who document continuing Contra activities in Nicaragua. We also receive alerts from EcoAndes (Ecumenical Committee on the Andes), (Indigenous Rights group), and from time to time receive alerts on human rights abuses in other parts of Latin America.

Most telexes go out to the president of the country or representative of the organization involved, chief of the armed forces, and/or to a local military commander in charge of a facility where someone is known to be held. In a few cases the telexes go out to the US ambassador or to US

officials and a country's ambassador in Washington, depending on the nature of the case.

These rapid response alerts fill a different role from the petition drives of Amnesty International and other organizations, with whom we also work. The telexes send a message that the news of an event is spread throughout the world, and that people care. They can make a difference, staving off torture or assassination in a situation where every hour counts. When we have been able to follow an incident closely, we have found that a rapid telex response has been repeatedly linked with the subsequent release of individuals who have been seized. They also serve to alert people in our local community about events not being published in our newspapers or described on television news shows.

RESPONSE NETWORK TELEX AUTHORIZATION

Name _____

Title _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

Is this a temporary Address? _____ Until what date _____

You have my permission to send 2 _____ 6 _____ 12 _____ telexes per year in my name in response to disappearances, death threats, torture, etc. in Latin American countries. The cost is approx. \$6.50 each. I understand that I will receive a copy of the message sent and that this authorization is valid for one (1) year from the date signed.

Signature _____ Date _____

BOLIVIA UPDATE:

Follow the "vanguard"

George Gray Molina

On the Bolivian side of the US "war on drugs" the meetings of the eighth Congress of the Bolivian Workers (COB) held in late September witnessed a strong political rift between organized peasants and workers over the "drug issue" questioning the ultimate political identity of this national trade union body. Fundamental changes within the labor movement, closely related to the declining role of the traditionally militant mining unions over the past four years, have increasingly strengthened coca-grower unions' claim to the "vanguard" role against the government policies on coca and cocaine within Bolivia. The unions, pushing for a second "Campesino" General Secretariat in the COB's Executive Committee, have been organized since 1987 in the Campesino Workers Confederation (CSUTCB).

An echo of these "vanguard" sentiments was also heard three weeks later on October 10 when the presidents of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia met at Ica, Peru, to discuss and develop a coordinated strategy for the region, calling for a December summit in Bolivia between President Bush and European heads of state. Although it is too soon to predict the outcome of such initiatives, the past years' influx of international aid aimed at interdiction and substitution of coca crops has frequently emphasized the importance of countering "narcoterrorism" over the "long" term goal of alternative agricultural development. This year, the US government plans to grant \$67 million to

Bolivian military, police, judicial and intelligence forces for drug control and \$30 million to alternative development projects.

On a more recent note, the December 3 municipal elections also rallied around inter-regional relations affecting unemployed and underemployed workers in the nation's urban centers. In La Paz, radio and TV star Carlos Palenque (CONDEPA) rounded out a sure victory on a primarily regionalist ticket for "endogenous economic self-sufficiency" and populist politics, against front-runners Ronald MacLean former-mayor, for the "officialist" candidacy (ADN-MIR), former university dean Guido Capra (MNR), and popular folksinger Ernesto Cavour (IU). In a year of unorthodox politics for Bolivia, the new political actors

emerging at the workers' and regional levels are facing the challenge of fast-paced "drug war" politics home and abroad, under an increasingly "delicate" democratic crossroads.

The privatization of state industries (leading to thousands of laid-off workers in the state mining sector) has been an important element of the Bolivian government's New Economic Policy since 1985, designed to combat hyperinflation and shift the economic leadership of the state to a secondary role.

National elections this year brought an "unholy alliance" to power: President Jaime Paz Zamora from the Left Revolutionary Movement (MIR) and former military dictator Hugo Banzer Suárez from the National Democratic Action (ADN).

An Agriculture-Led Economic Strategy for Argentina: Is There a Place for It?

Santiago Dittella

In 1989 after 40 years of financial instability, Argentina has arrived once more at a situation of hyperinflation. The newly elected Peronist government of Mr. Menem will have to take a different economic initiative to lead the country out of one of the most serious economic crises in memory.

Given the enormous rate of surplus which Argentine agriculture provides (being the "milk cow" of Argentina's economy), the new government may be looking to promote its growth. Agriculture continues to be the major source of income for the country and that sector continues to enjoy a substantial comparative advantage. However, at the same time many nations around the world have developed increasingly protectionist policies toward agricultural products.

This did not happen all at once. Agricultural protectionism has been a facet of economic policies in most countries for many years, the new aspect of the situation being the growing intensity of the protective measures. Lately, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) has been of almost no influence in obtaining reductions in agricultural protectionism. Paying more than is necessary for food, produced at home rather than abroad makes very little economic sense (in most countries, an ex-farmer in a factory is worth a good deal more to the economy than a farmer in the field). Right now, the fact that Argentine farmers, in all their numbers, are in the field receives widespread political recognition, but clearly, before the new government can define any agricultural policy it has to consider some of the changes that have occurred in the interna-

tional markets.

One of the main concerns in recent years is that primary commodity prices have been declining. It is argued that while improvements in labor productivity in the production of primary commodities were reflected in lower product prices, improvements in labor productivity in manufacturing were appropriated largely by organized labor in the form of improved incomes, with little consequent downward pressure on prices. The other fact that must be acknowledged is that any country pretending to promote exports, in order to be competitive, has to produce a real devaluation of the currency to lower agricultural production costs in dollars terms. In the case of Argentina, a heavy devaluation would offer a further advantage in the long run by encouraging the repatriation of capital that has left the country in the past decade. Outflow of capital accounts for \$30 billion. The problem with such a policy is that it is extremely difficult to maintain an effective devaluation. A devaluation of 100 percent can be quickly negated by 100 percent inflation. These devaluations can also generate sharp recessions, because they decrease real income by increasing the cost of basic household expenses. This could become particularly serious if the items exported constitute a great proportion of domestically consumed goods (for example, meat or wheat in Argentina). As we can see, this puts a serious constraint on this type of strategy, particularly in countries where powerful unions represent wage earners in the political system. A further consideration on the behavior of agricultural behavior is that the demand for Argentine grain is not entirely elastic because the demand for

necessities such as food are said to be inelastic; and they remain about the same, despite price changes. As a result, prices received would fall not only on the additional product but on the former amount exported, as well. So increasing production in this context could be a self-defeating exercise.

We can see that if a devaluation in the exchange rate is to be carried out, one possibility would be to perform the devaluation only for the exportation of industrial products. This would have the advantage of increasing government revenues to help offset the fiscal deficit and minimize the social cost of a price increase in consumer goods. Promoting the export of agricultural products that don't have an internal market could also prove very appealing. Soybeans provide a good example of additive advantages, because they compete in a relatively free world market and are not consumed by the Argentine population. The promotion of this product could also lead to the incorporation of currently uncultivated land into the Argentine economic system.

Santiago Di Tella is a graduate student in Animal Science and President of the Latin American Students Assoc. at Cornell

Patterson, cont. from p. 11
(with an interesting bias toward the right) for describing our own bodies, particularly our hands.

Because of its reference to parliamentary tradition and to parts of the body, this metaphor has important limitations, particularly when discussing a nation such as El Salvador, since it suggests a degree of balance between the two sides. As anyone who has studied El Salvador can tell, the "right" there historically has con-

trolled nearly all of the agricultural and industrial wealth and has dominated all the major institutions. When the "left" has tried to change this, its challenges have been met by the "right" with overwhelmingly brutal repression whose goal has been annihilation. (Witness the recent savage attacks by the military against unions and the churches). I'd argue that language which conveys the sense of "above" and "below", dominator and dominated, would be more appropriate to the situation. But it is precisely to avoid such terms, which themselves are stigmatized as "leftist", that the media use the "right-left" analogy, propagating the illusion that the two sides are equal in power. Examples are everywhere; the New York Times for November 19th refers to the "two strong armies" of "right and left" in El Salvador, ignoring the fact that one of them has U.S.-supplied helicopters, gunships, and fighter-bombers, while the other may or may not be receiving a trickle of arms from Nicaragua. President Bush said in his statement on the assassination of Father Ellacuria that either "the right or the left" may have been responsible, a particularly grotesque attempt to mystify the nature of the "left" and to place it on an equal footing with the "right."

A related figure of speech often is involved in descriptions of the politics of "right and left" as well, the image of a right wing "out of control." We see it in government and media statements which picture Christiani as a well-meaning democrat "trapped" by the violence of "right and left." Such descriptions also perpetuate the illusion, fostered by military men who form ununiformed death squads to kill civilians, that the

government and military in El Salvador aren't really responsible for much "right wing" violence and so add to the sense that "right and left" are two equal powers which neutral government officials seek to balance. Examples of this mode of description appear frequently in our own political discourse as well; Oliver North is pictured as a "loose cannon" without presidential authority, C.I.A. assassination plots are seen as the work of an institution which supposedly is like a "rogue elephant" in relation to the rest of the executive branch.

It also is important to note, in discussing the problems inherent in the way in which the Salvadoran "left" is depicted, that there is a marked tendency to oversimplify, reduce, and dehistoricize the complex nature of the Salvadoran opposition. A movement which involves difficult alliances of Christian Democrats, social democrats, labor, peasants, and church groups, as well as various communist factions, is reduced in U.S. political and media discussion to "leftist guerrillas." The F.D.R. is submerged in the F.M.L.N., Ungo is confounded with Villalobos, community organizers, catechists, and the mothers of the disappeared themselves are "disappeared" from public consciousness. The entire Salvadoran opposition is reduced to the status of an alien, violent, faceless enemy with no points of similarity to us "Americans." Students of U.S. history may note that a similar mode of thought is evident in public perceptions of "the Indians," the Philippine "rebels," and the "Viet Cong" in earlier wars. That some "Indians," such as the Cherokee Nation, attempted to build a social and political system modelled on that of the U.S., that President Aguinaldo of the Philippine Re-

public modelled his government on ours and sought our aid, that Ho Chi Minh issued a Declaration of Independence based on Jefferson's and asked Truman's aid in defeating the French, or that much of the Salvadoran "left" is committed to social democratic policies not incompatible with the dominant political paradigm in the U.S., is erased by such simplifying terms.

When the Sheraton Hotel was taken by the F.M.L.N., President Bush denounced it as an outrageous act of terrorism, though when less expensive pieces of real estate in the vast slums of San Salvador were bombed and strafed by the Salvadoran air force, he was silent.

A few other stock phrases and ideas which recur in the dominant discourse on El Salvador are worth remarking. One frequently hears politicians and news commentators refer to the F.M.L.N. "shooting their way into power," untroubled by the fact that the oligarchy and its various dreadful governments have been keeping themselves in power by shooting for decades. Martinez Hernandez, of the "Matanza" in which more than 30,000 people were murdered, "Chele" Medrano, the godfather of the death squads, and Roberto D'Aubuisson, the probable instigator of the assassination of Archbishop Romero, all neatly vanish in such a formulation. F.D.R. leaders, such as Ungo and Zamora, when they are mentioned at all, are criticized for their association with F.M.L.N. "terror-

ists," but Cristiani's alliance with the likes of D'Aubuisson, Col. Roberto Staben, who kidnapped and ransomed members of the oligarchy and blamed it on the guerrillas, or Col. Nicholas Carranza, who ran the Treasury Police and oversaw its infamous death squad for five years, never is raised.

When the Sheraton Hotel was taken by the F.M.L.N., President Bush denounced it as an outrageous act of terrorism, though when less expensive pieces of real estate in the vast slums of San Salvador were bombed and strafed by the Salvadoran air force, he was silent. No one points out the grotesque hypocrisy or, perhaps more appropriately, vomits with disgust, when President Bush vetoes a foreign aid bill involving China because Chinese birth control policies are "inconsistent with American values" while on the same afternoon he demands that aid to El Salvador not be suspended despite the murders of the Jesuit priests. Presumably fetuses matter vastly more than university rectors—if the latter dare to criticize U.S. client states. And of course, the ultimate irony never is observed—that the United States is assisting one of the most truly evil regimes in modern history to martyr an entire people and their church in a nation called "the Savior." I think of the old Mexican proverb, "poor Mexico, so far from God, and so near the United States," and wonder, indeed, if we aren't really on the side of the devil in this dreadful war. But it's a question you'll never hear in political speeches and news commentary.

Eric Patterson teaches at Hobart and William Smith College. He has taught a course on U.S. intervention in Central America since 1985.

Kingpin, cont. from p. 15 and repression are directed against humble people, not the traffickers."

In her article, "Playing Golf While the Drugs Flow," (*The Nation*, 2/13/89) Penny Lernoux suggests that the U.S. is quietly planning a permanent military presence in Bolivia, and that Bolivia may eventually be a new home for the Southern Command, presently based in Panama. The army corp of engineers is presently lengthening the runways at the airport in La Paz (Latin America Weekly Report) and many are speculating that Bolivia, already the second poorest per capita country in the hemisphere, may become the "Honduras of the Southern Cone."

Lernoux reported that a major cocaine operation is running near --almost right next to-- the base where the U.S. military are staying in Bolivia. Apparently the military is oblivious to it. So what are they there for? The official goal of the United States in the region is to repress "narco-terrorism" and to eradicate coca plants. Last year the U.S. provided Bolivia with \$58 million for interdiction and eradication. This year, \$67 million has been allocated to the Bolivian military, police, judicial and intelligence forces. Only \$30 million will be provided for alternative development projects.

The State department recently declared Latin America the number one terrorist region in the world on account of the "alliance" between drug traffickers and revolutionaries. The "link" was "discovered" in 1984 when, after the biggest cocaine bust in history, the U.S. ambassador to Colombia announced that the raided drug facilities had been protected by Communist rebels whom he

termed "Narcoguerillas." (For more on the "Myth of the Narcoguerilla" see *The Nation* 8/13/88. President Reagan signed a secret national security directive in 1986 that, for the first time officially labeled international drug trafficking a threat to national security.

Subsequently the "war on drugs" targeted guerilla insurgencies operating in coca regions even if they weren't themselves coca growers or traffickers. It is important to note that while some guerilla organizations, (especially Sendero Luminoso) provide protection to peasants growing coca and poppies -protection from the military and from the exploitation and violence of the drug traffickers-- the guerillas themselves are not usually involved in the cultivation or trafficking of the drugs. So, while eradicating coca crops in insurgent regions, while it does little to affect drug supply and cost, it may well destroy the guerillas' local support systems, especially when the herbicide used is a dangerous defoliant like "Spike" (see CUSLAR newsletter for October).

The other important factor in the war is that most popular revolutionary organizations --not necessarily Peru's Shining Path-- wish to overthrow the existing political and economic systems, whereas the traffickers wish to join the ruling elite. Offering protection to peasant farmers who are growing the only crop they can make a living off from --especially when their overworked land won't grow much else-- is a good strategy for the revolutionaries who wish to enlist the popular support for their cause.

Ultimately, the "drug war" in Latin America is --and has been up to now-- a war between revolutionary insurgencies and death squads organized by the Co-

lombian or Peruvian traffickers, often working in conjunction with the militaries. (See Mark Rabine, "The War on Drugs" *Z Magazine*, December, 1988). The U.S. Government is pro-military, anti-poor, anti-labor. It supports death squad governments such as El Salvador's and deals drugs to support contra terrorists. Which side do you think we're on in Latin America?

My view is that Bush's drug wars here and abroad must be viewed in terms of the debt crisis and poverty. In the case of Latin America, the drug crisis is a response to the debt crisis brought on mostly by Reagan's economic policies that lead interest rates to skyrocket in the early 1980's. Crushed under their debt load, the value of Latin America's products has dropped below the lowest values of the depression years. Meanwhile the cost of products in the U.S. remains high. In the past decade Latin America has experienced a capital flight of \$106 billion. So ultimately the only resort for hard core poverty, that only gets worse as the rich get richer, is in drugs and/or popular revolt.

As long as Bush fails to understand that and avoids progressive leadership based on addressing the underlying causes of the drug crisis in the Americas, we can expect any cure he comes up with to be worse than the disease.

Good information/good reading: See the five part series in the *Guardian* on the drug crisis (weeks of 9/27 - 11/22); Noam Chomsky's "The Problems of Population Control" (*Z Magazine*, 9/89) may chill your spine; another excellent article, in case you missed it, was Tom Naylor's "Narco Dollar Dependence" in *The Grapevine*, 11/22-28/89.

CUSLAR Fall Review

At Home.....

CUSLAR is a diverse group, composed of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty members and community people. We are united in our concern about the role of the United States in influencing social, political and economic conditions in Latin America. Within this context, we support the right of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean to self-determination and to free themselves from a legacy of colonialism, underdevelopment and oppression.

This fall CUSLAR members and supporters have been involved in a variety of programming such as the Speaker and Film Series, video educational outreach, fundraising, the upkeep of our growing lending library and the production of the CUSLAR Newsletter. Our Speakers Series included three talks on elections: Thomas Walker (Nicaragua), Leonardo Vargas (Chile), Marcial Riquelme (Paraguay).

This summer CUSLAR will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a reunion of former members aimed not only at merrymaking but discussion about the past, present and future work of CUSLAR and, among other things, the state of solidarity work in the U.S. today.

In order to be as effective as possible over the years, CUSLAR has promoted self-assessment and critical evaluation of the types

of activities we undertake and their order of priority. This fall we have had several meetings devoted to this organizational process with the goal of focussing on certain subjects or themes in our programming while remaining flexible enough to meet unexpected, specific challenges as they arise (e.g. responding on short notice to the crisis in El Salvador and speakers who we cannot schedule in advance).

As part of the process of change and reassessment of our work strategies, the membership has decided to create an Advisory Board made up of representatives from local progressive organizations in labor, religion, education, etc. Coalition-building with these groups will help CUSLAR to clarify its goals and formulate work strategies by drawing on the varied experiences of the Advisory Board members and the "institutional memory" provided over time. (copies of the Advisory Board Proposal are available in the office).

The people in various CUSLAR subcommittees are looking for assistance with research, outreach, programming, etc. If you are interested in human rights issues, legislative action, Newsletter production, fundraising, or would like to find out more about Latin America, visit the CUSLAR office or come to a general meeting.
Happy Vacation!

The Committee on US-Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a project of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy (CRESP), based at Cornell University. We work 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.

The CUSLAR Newsletter is published bi-monthly and provides 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. The CUSLAR Newsletter committee cooperates with authors to reach mutually acceptable editorial decisions. If you are interested in writing for the Newsletter or working on the committee, please call the CUSLAR office at (607) 255-7293. We welcome your suggestions and letters to the editors.

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER



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