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ON THE 25TH YEAR OF OPPOSITION TO 25 YEARS OF INTERVENTION

CUSLAR was first founded as an ad-hoc student organization following the US invasion of the Dominican republic in 1965. Since then, the group has been restructured many times over the years, and has shifted its focus first to the "Southern Cone" countries of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, then to the Central American nations of El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Over 25 years, we have found that US intervention is not an ad-hoc phenomenon, but is a constant fact throughout our hemisphere. In some nations intervention consists of diplomatic pressure and economic clout, while in others it comes along with massive amounts of military aid that turn the "Forces of Order" into a repressive apparatus free from any local control by citizens or elected officials.

One of the great themes of the past few years is that of "redemocratization". Seeking an influx of foreign capital, redemocratizing governments have repeatedly prioritized the interests of foreign investors over those of their own citizens. In Brazil, Chile and Argentina the return to structures of electoral democracy has aroused great hope, but a legacy of social inequality combined with economic crisis and the recent history of political and social repression create poor conditions for work for social justice.

There is a recurrent connection between US intervention and the violation of human rights. In some nations it appears to consist merely of an unwillingness on the part of US lawmakers and businesspeople to admit that their economic commitment to a repressive government implies support of that government's policies. If possible, they try to deny that their friends and colleagues in high places could possibly be promoting or condoning torture and assassination. Even more vehemently they deny that repressive measures against unions and popular organizations are required in order to maintain "a good investment climate" for US banks and business.

In other nations, the United States sends military advisors and specialized equipment with the specific purpose of creating or reinforcing special military units to be mobilized against local citizens. The "special forces" we train at centers like Fort Bragg go on to be involved in brutal acts of repression. Our Congresspeople vote to send millions of dollars of US taxes to create a huge military apparatus under the twisted rationale that in doing so they are supporting "fragile democracy" in that nation. We have seen this taken to a grotesque extreme in El Salvador. Conditions in Honduras have deteriorated under massive military exercises and the Contra war. Strategists in Washington and Managua are now trying to transform the Nicaraguan military from a Sandinista army dedicated to the defense of the civilian population, to a force that can be used for civil repression.

And then there is the "Drug War", using the social problems of substance abuse and addiction in the United States as a rationale for militarizing large regions of the Andes, an area being considered as a possible site for a new Southern Command of the US military forces. Inaccurate accusations of "drugrunning" have replaced inaccurate accusations of "spying for the Soviets" or "fomenting World Communism" as a catch-all rationale for military invasion or economic blockade of strategic neighbors like Panama or Cuba. Military aid is offered to countries like Guatemala or Peru, where civil war against guerrilla organizations has become a smokescreen for genocide against stubborn survivors, Maya or Quechua speakers, inheritors of the greatest indigenous American civilizations.

We must work together to keep the voices of grassroots opposition to US foreign policy alive, because these policies are based on a concept of world order that requires the repression of popular democracy both at home and abroad.

- Ann Peters

CUSLAR meets each Monday at 5pm in the Commons Coffee House, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University. We invite you to join us. This edition has been produced by Ann Peters, Veronica Bleuzé, Wally Babcock, José Rodriguez, Janice Degni, and Bruce Armstrong.

Psy-Ops, Citizens, and the Panama Invasion

The invasion of Panama in December 1989 was the most massive use of U.S. military force since the Vietnam war, and resulted in many times more death and destruction than any event in the history of that part of the world. It is possible that the sacking and burning of Panama City by Henry Morgan in 1671 took something approaching as many lives, but the political and material stakes are higher than those of 318 years ago, and the shaping of public perceptions of what happened, and why, is much more sophisticated.

The events of December 1989 will also soon be relegated to the history books, as the attention span of the media and the general public shortens. But just as the planners in the U.S. policy establishment will continue to assess the "fallout" as they look forward to future scenarios, so must the people of the United States learn from the tragic events in Panama in planning their own political strategies. There are many things that need to be said about the Panama invasion, but I want to focus here on the relationship between "Psychological Operations" and the duty of informed and committed citizens in a democracy to hold their government accountable.

New forms of "PsyOps" have become integral components of U.S. military planning, training, and operational strategy and tactics. This development is a tacit recognition that a major constraint on the use of military force abroad is the "PR" problem within the United States—the likelihood that negative public opinion will cause political damage to civilian office holders associated with the action, including the president and his allies and supporters. By raising a hue and cry from the heartland to the halls of congress, such critics can do political damage to the civilians who use the military as their instrument, and limit military options in the future.

From WW I posters depicting the Kaiser's minions as barbarian "Huns" and the dropping of leaflets in WW II telling the Japanese their cause was hopeless, psychological warfare has moved into the age of high-tech media manipulation. It is now aimed not only to appeal to chauvinistic urges or to demoralize the enemy, but to deprive the new foe—

the critical U.S. public—of the basis for its opposition. In a sense, this newly sophisticated "PsyOps" planning recognizes that an important segment of the population of the United States is part of "the enemy," that must be "neutralized."

A major rub since Vietnam has been how to deal with these internal "enemies." Eliminating them in a massive artillery barrage or shooting them in their tracks (the fate of many Panamanian civilians), arrest and internment (also the fate of some 5,000 Panamanians), smearing critics as tools or agents of world Communism (as during the Vietnam War), are unavailable or inappropriate to the cases now likely to arise.

The tactical weapons in this new approach to psychological warfare are used primarily to limit,

This newly sophisticated "PsyOps" planning recognizes that an important segment of the population of the United States is part of "the enemy" that must be "neutralized."

create, and otherwise shape the information this potential internal enemy has available as ammunition in the battle of words and wills that parallels the battle of bullets and bombs. Among important PsyOps techniques used in Panama were sealing off zones of death and destruction even to "friendly" reporters and film crews; feeding a few "pool" correspondents carefully crafted bits of information; creating a complementary range of incidents, interviews, and survey results that multiply to become a "reality" the military planners find favorable to their purpose.

A major element in the planning of the Panama operation must have included the assessment that Noriega had so many enemies and so few supporters, both inside and outside Panama, that his political demise would be cheered far and wide. Because the entire rationale of the operation focused on the

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person of Noriega, the planners concluded, critics would be left with no basis for opposition. The decision to "go in" was based on such public relations considerations as much as on purely military concerns. The nearly universal, if sometimes begrudging, support in Congress and major press organs was a vindication of that assessment, and PsyOps scored another victory.

The Bush regime clearly anticipated a litany of objections: "You violated international law, the canal treaties, and any pretense of Panamanian sovereignty; you killed hundreds of innocent civilians; you destroyed the homes of tens of thousands of Panamanians and tens of millions of dollars worth of property; you caused the death of several U.S. soldiers whose aspiration to 'be all that they could be' did not include being dead." The ready answer: "Yes, but we got Noriega, didn't we?" This reduced the critics to a fading spiral of "yes, but" exchanges in which the media, always dominated by "new" news, quickly lost interest. The expectation of such a sequence was a PsyOps assessment, and it was crucial to the "success" of the operation as a whole, along with surprise and the massive deployment of destructive firepower.

It may seem like a small success for critics of the U.S. practice of throwing its considerable weight around in the international arena, but if the concerned U.S. public can force upon policy strategists the limitation that such operations will only succeed politically if the target is "a Noriega," it is preferable over leaving those strategists a free hand.

To maintain those and further limits will require that the concerned public keep informed about and involved in international affairs in ways that go far beyond our own immediate and private concerns. The people of the United States must not let the "Noriega problem" obscure the insidious role of media manipulation and other PsyOps techniques in modern warfare. We live in an era in which our power to limit and influence the military action taken in our name has become a problem to be neutralized by non-violent "psychological" techniques. The violent assaults this permits against our principles and against other peoples must not go unchallenged.

- Thomas Holloway

Ithaca, New York February 1990

THIS IS OUR MISSION - WE WILL RUN
AN OPERATION AGAINST NICARAGUA
THAT VIOLATES U.S. LAW



WE WILL KEEP THE AMERICAN
PUBLIC IN THE DARK ABOUT
OUR ACTIVITIES



WE WILL BRING TO THE NICARAGUAN
PEOPLE THE NATIONAL GUARD
THEY JUST THREW OUT



DO WE HAVE
A CODE NAME?

PROJECT
DEMOCRACY



Nicaragua: Will Revolutionary Democracy Succeed?

14 May 1990 — The situation today in Nicaragua is nothing if not complex. The UNO [now the National Organized Union—they're no longer the "opposition"] is speaking in many voices: some moderate and some eager for 'rollback.' The FSLN is one of the strongest left opposition blocs in Latin America, yet signs of dissatisfaction with the party can no longer be ignored. The contras, and their Washington founding fathers, speak of demobilizing, yet are far from actually disarming. And the international solidarity community is struggling with how to relate to the FSLN and an UNO government.

Hints of What's Next: UNO's program:

The bold UNO campaign claims to rapidly eliminate inflation and jump-start the economy may, in practice, result in an austerity program more severe than that implemented by the Sandinistas. UNO's economic program was drawn-up by economist Francisco Mayorga. Along with privatization, and a "more reasonable tax law," the 'Mayorga Plan' provides vague proposals for 'modernizing productive capacity,' providing social programs and bettering the situation of workers and the poor. For example, just how UNO will establish an "emergency safety net" (the words are Reaganesque) to help the war-displaced remains an open question:

"Through the existing Social

Security Institute, we will introduce a special program to improve the difficult situation of war widows with small children, orphans and war-handicapped. Except in the case of irreparable damage, this aid will be temporary, expecting that new employment opportunities and the creation of small enterprise will enable these people to regain control over their destiny."

UNO's messages concerning agrarian reform are confusing, but they do suggest a gradual

In UNO, there is a deep split between the "Las Palmas" faction led by Chamorro and her top advisors and the group lead by UNO political council and Vice-president Virgilio Godoy.

rollback. UNO will sell state properties and will likely call for cooperatives to be broken up into small single-owner plots. Peasants who have received land will be given new titles that allow them to sell their land if desired. (Perhaps to steal the credit from UNO, the outgoing Sandinista-dominated National Assembly passed a law providing land titles that can be sold.) The overall UNO approach to land reform will allow big land owners to buy out debt-ridden peasant farmers, which would lead to the same inequitable land distribution system seen in other third world countries geared toward agro-

exports (and, of course, in the agri-business dominated US).

UNO, however, is not speaking with one voice. There is a deep split between the "Las Palmas" faction led by the president and her top advisors (especially Antonio Lacayo and Alfredo Cesar), and the group lead by the UNO political council and Vice-president Virgilio Godoy. The political council represents the broad range of parties in UNO. Godoy (who was virtually ignored during the campaign) is championing the cause of the ultra-right in UNO, in what appears to be a last-ditch effort to gain some power.

The split has become particularly bitter due to Chamorro's decision to promote reconciliation by temporarily retaining Humberto Ortega as head of the army (the President herself will be Defense Minister). UNO's far right-wing is also infuriated by Chamorro's selection of cabinet ministers. The right-wing business group COSEP, which reflects wealthy interests from the days of Somoza, was virtually ignored in favor of CORDENIC, a recently formed, more "modern" grouping of a few businesspeople and economists. CORDENIC strongly supported Chamorro's candidacy, but was also prepared to negotiate with a victorious Sandinista government. Two "COSEPistas" asked to take cabinet posts declined apparently because of General Ortega's re-appointment.

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The split within UNO was also manifested in electing officers of the National Assembly. After hours of tense negotiations and heated debate the UNO faction supporting Cesar and the FSLN agreed to a compromise. Godoy's candidate, Miriam Arguello, was elected President of the Assembly, however all remaining positions went to Cesar and his backers and to FSLN deputies. The President of the Assembly controls who speaks on the floor, and is third in line for the presidency of the Republic. The post of First Secretary, won by Alfredo Cesar, controls the agenda of Assembly sessions and assigns legislation to committees. The Godoy ally defeated for First Secretary, Jaime Bonilla, had apparently been drinking during the session and stormed out prior to the vote.

While UNO is a contentious lot with deep rifts, it is unlikely to immediately split into "dos." There are considerable rewards of power and wealth associated with staying together. And the US government has a strong interest in providing those rewards.

UNO's victory opens the floodgates for expanded US intervention in Nicaragua's internal affairs. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) can be expected to play a significant role in UNO's management of the economy. This next period will also see far more involvement of "democratic" institutions such as those funded by the National Endowment for

Democracy. For example, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) will have increased access to organize compliant unions in an attempt to dilute the strength of pro-Sandinista labor organizations.

Defending the Revolution

In contrast to UNO's expected attempts to turnback the revolution, the FSLN has communicated to its supporters the party's resolve to defend the revolutionary gains. In a communique read by President Ortega on February 27 to a spontaneous



Disabled Veterans march before the elections

gathering of tens of thousands after a national meeting of Sandinista militants, the FSLN committed itself to:

- defend benefits received through the land reform, and social benefits including those given to victims of the contra war;
- demand the immediate disbanding and disarming of the contras to ensure a peaceful transition of government (and to prevent armed retribution against Sandinista supporters);
- maintain the professionalism and integrity of the military and the interior ministry (so that the contras or ex-Somoza National Guardmen do not take over those forces);
- protect those elements of

the economy that are now nationalized;

- defend the Constitution and provisions which guarantee the right to strike, to demonstrate, and to have a free press.

- defend job security for state employees who have the right to remain in their jobs.

The Sandinistas will serve as a vigorous opposition prepared to defend the gains of the revolution by "governing from below." When UNO's proposals benefit the poor majority, the FSLN will support the effort; the Sandinistas have welcomed the lifting of

the trade embargo and increased US economic assistance (despite the inherent problems of such aid). On the other hand, efforts to roll back the revolution and benefit the wealthier classes at the expense of the poor will be actively opposed by the FSLN.

Betsy Fuller

No one is quite sure, however, just what the now-opposition FSLN will do. A Sandinista spokesperson recently stated that the party must now learn how to serve as an opposition political party. After all, the Frente was first a guerilla force, and then they became the government.

The struggle will be played out in many arenas: through negotiations, in the National Assembly (where Sergio Ramirez will lead the powerful FSLN bloc) and in the courts. The work of pro-Sandinista mass organizations — unions, peasant groups, women's groups, youth movements, and cooperatives — will perhaps be more important than

ever before. In the past 10 years, these groups have declined to press certain justifiable demands in the greater interest of supporting the revolutionary process. Now with an UNO government comprised of the wealthy and allied with the US, the mass organizations will aggressively pursue their demands. Says Edgardo Garcia of the Farmworkers' Association (ATC), "a government that has no economic blockade or military aggression to confront is a government with more obligations toward workers." The mass organizations can be expected to demonstrate and strike when necessary to protest unfair policies.

Already there has been a dramatic increase in labor activity since the elections. As this article was written, state workers had begun a general strike to protest UNO's suspension of the civil service laws. The law passed March 13, 1990, protects workers from discrimination or being fired due to political reasons, and established workers' rights to job stability, training, promotion, union membership, and other social benefits. It was the opposition political parties who origi-

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nally demanded the civil service law during negotiations with the Sandinista government last August. State workers are also protesting the elimination of transportation subsidies and demanding salary increases that stay ahead of the inflation rate

which has dramatically increased since the elections.

UNO's angry response to the strike—threatening mass firings as Reagan did to PATCO—indicates the new government's willingness to do battle. While President Chamorro and her ministers appear to be interested in 'bringing the Nicaraguan family together,' they are also intent on reconciliation with the International Monetary Fund. Although the FSLN also implemented severe austerity measures, they had considerable moral authority to draw upon when asking their base to accept hardships. The current mobilization has been set off by UNO's aggressiveness, and the insecurity people feel about their jobs, homes and land. Workers are also upset by rumors that UNO ministers will receive exorbitant salaries in dollars (not cordobas).

Criticism/Self-criticism:

In order to ensure their strength for governing from below, the FSLN is engaged in a vigorous process of self-criticism. It seems clear at this point that Nicaraguans voted for peace and an improved economy on February 25. Whether they approved of the principles of the revolution or not, a majority of voters did not believe the FSLN promise: "todo será mejor" [everything will be better]. Some have suggested that there may have been too much emphasis on turning people out to magnificent campaign rallies and offering FSLN merchandise, rather than really listening to voters' concerns.

There have been criticisms that apathy had spread over the years through the grassroots in some pro-FSLN mass organizations as the FSLN worried about

running the government. Commandante Victor Tirado states in a March 20 interview with Barricada that the Sandinista party must

"assume a critical attitude about the errors it committed and the correct things it did... We have to democratize the structures, make room for new cadre, for the new leaders, all this in the light of a new organizational conception of the FSLN, one with a less top-down vision."

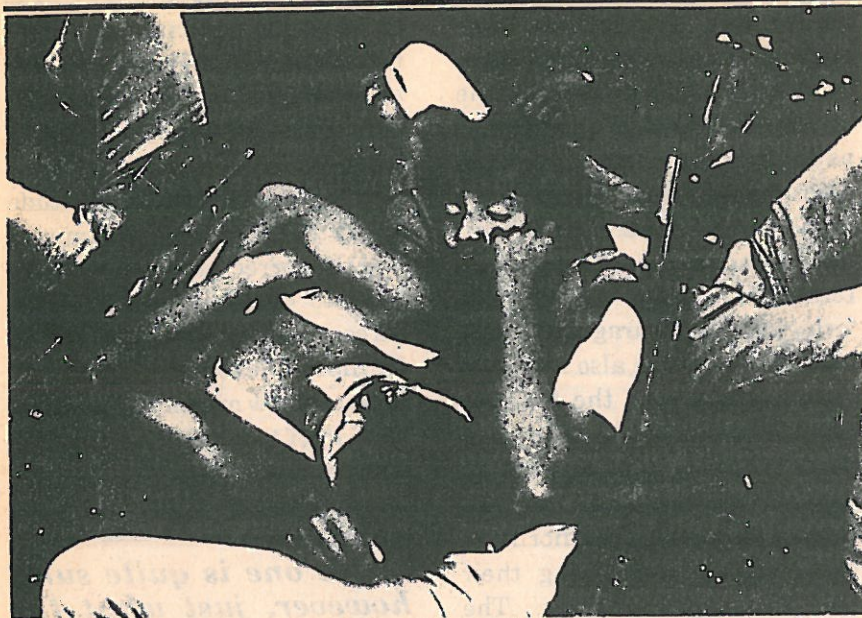
The FSLN remains a solid

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bloc although there are apparent divisions. Workers in a Managua hospital recently disaffiliated from the FSLN-led union FET-SALUD. A pro-UNO faction is trying to wrest control of the teachers' union from its Sandinista leadership. Disagreements in the ranks emerged during a post-election National Assembly debate. Five Sandinista delegates supported a proposal by the Marxist-Leninist Party to raise the minimum wage that Assembly president, and FSLN leader, Carlos Nuñez called irresponsible.

The Contra Question-mark:

For the first time in Nicaraguan history, there will be a powerful opposition party who can keep in check the excesses of a US-backed government. The potential, then, exists for the consolidation of a vigorous democracy with active and peaceful civic struggle as its hallmark. Yet the situation is extremely tense in Nicaragua due to the



Claudia Cordille

Young militia soldiers

continued armed presence of the US-funded contras within Nicaragua. Despite recent agreements to demobilize signed by the contras, the mercenary force still has the potential to turn the current difficult situation into civil war, and thus prevent the transition from military to civic political struggle.

On the afternoon of Violeta Chamorro's inauguration as President, top contra leaders, "Franklin," "Ruben," and Aristides Sanchez declared that they would not turn in their arms unless Humberto Ortega is removed as head of the Nicaraguan army. The contras spoke to their troops in El Destino, about 23 kilometers north of Yali. Officials of the UN peacekeeping force, the OAS, and the CIAV (the UN/OAS commission which is to provide humanitarian aid for disarmed contras) were present, as were Roberto Ferrey of the UNO government and a representative of Cardinal Obando y Bravo. Ferrey called on the contras to follow the demobilization accords, stating that with the UNO government in place, war

was no longer necessary.

Contras continue to show their unwillingness to demobilize in other ways. On April 25, just hours after Violeta Chamorro took office, investigators from Witness for Peace watched a group of contras pillage a rural health center in the La Rica resettlement community, 20 miles northeast of Yali, Jinotega. La Rica is inside one of the security zones specified in the latest demobilization agreement. The contras stole all of the center's medicines and equipment, and destroyed records and files. Because La Rica is in a security zone, the local self-defense militia had been disarmed. Perhaps some of the \$2.5 million in emergency medical aid Dan Quayle brought to Violeta Chamorro's inauguration might be used in La Rica.

After 15 hours of talks starting May 4, President Chamorro and contra leaders agreed to the "Declaration of Managua." The contras again pledged to demobilize and disarm, in exchange for the establishment of "development poles" which contras may

choose to resettle into. UNO government ministers have been meeting with contra leaders to promise the fighters upon returning to civilian life considerable assistance. Initially, a few wounded, very young or older contras have disarmed. According to Witness for Peace, contras who disarmed during a recent ceremony told reporters that contra leaders selected who would actually disarm.

The situation remains tense in Nicaragua, as many take a skeptical "wait and see" attitude toward the latest contra demobilization agreement. There is the wide-spread belief that the signing of recent accords has been a tactic by the contras to buy more time and put more pressure on Chamorro. Many citizens wonder at what price contra demobilization will be bought. Through strikes and other actions Nicaraguans continue to demand the immediate demobilization of the contras.

Challenges for Solidarity:

What directions can solidarity take during this difficult period? Activists from around the country met in Washington, DC, on March 25, to discuss the challenges ahead for Nicaragua solidarity work. Alejandro Bendaña, Secretary General of the Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry, shared his impressions.

"I remember getting a phone call on February 26th, the day after the election, and a well-meaning individual asked, 'You let us down.' Well, I snapped back, 'you let us down. You didn't stop the war. You didn't stop the [economic] blockade.' And I think we were both partially right and partially wrong and emotionally wrought."

Bendaña praised the solidarity movement for helping to prevent a US invasion and for articulating a broad anti-intervention movement during "probably one of the worst decades of US imperialist behavior."

Some in the movement are calling for turning from Nicaragua to other causes, be it El Salvador, Cuba, South Africa, or "democratic renewal" at home. All progressive causes are certainly important ...including the Nicaraguan revolution. A challenge, then, for activists who remain committed to Nicaragua is to maintain a broad-based, vigorous, and visible movement that works in coalition with other activists.

The need remains great. The Bush administration refuses to force the contras to demobilize, perhaps because the contras are still useful as a bargaining chip. Reports indicate considerable pressure from Washington on the Chamorro government to reverse the decision to retain Humberto Ortega.

Alejandro Bendana made clear the goal for many in the US and the UNO administrations is still to eliminate the FSLN. The argument seems to be how best to accomplish that goal: militarily through the contras, or through a longer term plan of cooptation and infiltration [i.e., through AIFLD]. Both approaches can of course be pursued simultaneously.

It will be crucial for activists to decide where they stand on direct support for the FSLN. This may be a particular challenge for those who have approached the task of raising humanitarian aid or developing sistering relations in a 'non-partisan' way. The FSLN remains the

strongest force in Nicaragua promoting a radically progressive platform, and they will be under direct attack from all quarters. Those in solidarity not able to directly support the Frente Sandinista may choose instead to work with mass organizations aligned with the FSLN, particularly in Sister Cities that will now have an UNO mayor.

Organizations such as CUSLAR have much to offer the Nicaragua solidarity movement. CUSLAR has always taken a regional approach, helping us all avoid faddishly 'moving' from one

It will be crucial for activists to decide where they stand on direct support for the FSLN. This may be a particular challenge for those who have approached the task of raising humanitarian aid or developing sistering relations in a 'non-partisan' way.

country or movement to another. Further, CUSLAR members have long considered the role of US foreign aid, AIFLD, the right-wing religious movement, and other forms of intervention that, up to now, Nicaragua-specific activists have not had to confront to such an extent.

Concerning the struggle ahead, Alejandro Bendana emphasized:

"We are in this together. We cannot let the so-called Nicaragua issue disappear from the agenda of people and progressive movements here. Because too much is riding on it, in the Central American context. We have got to show that democracy, revolutionary democracy can and will succeed.

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Reports from the Nicaragua Network Managua office.

Bob Greene, a former CUSLAR member, is Information Coordinator of the Nicaragua Network, Washington, DC. The full transcript of Alejandro Bendana's 3/25/90 presentation, as well as more background on issues raised in this article are available from the Nicaragua Network. Call the Network's news hotline at (202) 223-NICA.

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CUSLAR History: Three Personal Visions

In honor of the 25th anniversary of the Committee on US/ Latin American Relations, we asked three former coordinators of CUSLAR to share with us their reflections on the meaning of CUSLAR's work during their time with the group. They write on the importance of CUSLAR in Ithaca, in Upstate New York, on the national and international levels. As with most of us who have been members of the group, working with CUSLAR transformed each of their lives.

Bill Rogers: The Origins of CUSLAR

Perhaps a word of introduction is in order. I served as the Presbyterian chaplain at Cornell from 1959 to 1979 when my wife, June, and I left Ithaca to accept a call from the Old First Church of Huntington, Long Island. We were in Huntington until 1987 and have since been serving the International Church of Bangkok.

My involvement with CUSLAR goes back to the middle 60s when Professors Richard Graham (Latin American History), Tom Davis (Latin American Studies Program) and some students and I put together a project in Brasil. That was in the summer of 1965 and was the beginning of my awareness of Latin America and the issues of US Latin American relations.

My memory of "what happened when" is hazy, but I do remember that somewhere back then President Johnson sent the US Marines into Santo Domingo and that

caused a bit of a stir on the campus. There were a number of graduate students at Cornell then who had been Peace Corps volunteers in Latin America and who were outraged by Johnson's action. There was a public meeting called and a debate of the issues at Goldwin Smith Hall. One of the speakers that night was Harrop Freeman of the Law School.

As I remember, the Committee on US/Latin American Relations was organized around that issue.

In any event, the experience of taking groups of Cornell students to Brazil in 1965 and 1966 led to the raising of my own critical awareness, as it did

theirs, and cooperation with CUSLAR's activities naturally followed.

By 1968 the Presbyterian chaplaincy at Cornell was merged with two others, forming what was then called the United Ministries in Higher Education. We operated within the structure of CURW and I was asked to develop a "ministry of internationalization." Not surprisingly, the focus was on US/Latin American relations. I took a sabbatical leave in 1968/69 and went with my family for a year of study in Brazil. I was looking for answers to a number of questions, such as: "What is economic development?" "How does it work?" "Who benefits at whose expense?" I remember writing a paper which I called "Modernization and Disaster," and coming back fired up to keep working on the inter-American issues.

I remember writing a paper which I called "Modernization and Disaster," and coming back fired up to keep working on the inter-American issues.

By that time CUSLAR no longer existed. The students who had organized the original group had all graduated and moved

on. In fact, as I remember, it was several years before CUSLAR came back into existence - which was sometime in the early 70s.

One of the first internationalization projects CURW started was something called "University Ministries and United States/Latin America Policy Study." The project was funded for three years by the Danforth Foundation and several denominational mission boards. It was part of a national project which included centers at the Universities of Wisconsin and Texas, as well as a California network. Our part of the project began in 1973 and included on its staff Gabriela Samper of Bogota,

Colombia; Cindy Dickersen, Student Intern; and Sister Therese Drummond, SND.

In '74 the staff included the Rev. Joel Gajardo of Santiago, Chile; Jenny Helbraun, Associate; and Sister Loreta Jordan, SND. It seems to me it was then that CUSLAR came back to life. We wanted to give as much support as we could to groups which were committed to critical reflection and consciousness raising on US/Latin American issues. We opened a resource center in Anabel Taylor Hall (room G-17) and found a number of students who were anxious to work on the issues. The question arose as to what to call the new student group.

Someone, I think it was Professor Joe Kahl (Sociology), suggested that since the name "CUSLAR" was still known, and since no one else was using it, we pick it up and use it for the new group. In any case, CUSLAR came back to life - with the same purpose it had had in the 1960s - and, with the able leadership and resourcing of students like Jenny and Cindy, Kevin Healy and many others, it kept the fires of awareness and action burning brightly.

Needless to say, it is heartwarming to know that

CUSLAR has survived the demise of all the other activist groups of the 60s and 70s and is looking forward to a renewed life in the decade to come.

June and I look forward to the August reunion. It will be good to share memories of the past, and get caught up on what has happened in the years since we left Ithaca, but we look forward, mostly, to getting brought up to date on what is happening in Latin America right now. What are the issues? How are Latin Americans looking now at the issues of economic development, socialism, liberation theology and a host of others?

We have been living in Bangkok for the past three years, in one of the most rapidly developing cities in the world. Thailand's dream is to become the next of Asia's economic tigers, after Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. Together with Japan they think they have the answer to successful development. As you know, it has to do with what is called "export oriented" development, in contrast to the "import substitution" policies which were followed in Latin America (Brazil in particular) in the 1960s and 70s.

So, Japan got rich by penetrating the American market, and so did the little tigers, but how much longer can it go on, and is it a solution for everyone?

Is it a solution for Brazil? If so, why haven't the Brazilians done it already? They are surely as smart as the Taiwanese. My suspicion is that it has a great deal to do with the legacies of colonialism and with the fact that the Asian countries (Japan and the tigers) lie so much farther outside the US economic and military sphere of influence.

In any case, these Asian "solutions" have their own built-in contradictions. The Thai economy is terribly exploitative, both of its people and its environment, and is now moving rapidly to exploit the natural resources of its neighbors.

June and I will finish our work here in Bangkok in June. In September we will return to Brazil where we will be teaching in a small theological seminary in Salvador, Bahia. We expect to spend the next three years in Brazil and would like to keep in touch with CUSLAR and our Cornell friends. We are staggered as we read the news from Brazil:

inflation rates of from 1,700 to several thousand percent a year (as reported in the Thai press), the third world's largest external debt, and the greatest gap between rich and poor of all the countries in the world. We

have recently read that the top 20 percent of Brazil's population receives 28 times as much income as the bottom 20 percent. Is that where dependent capitalism leads? Is that what Thailand has to look forward to?

In any case, now we are reading about the economic policies of Brazil's new president and are wondering where it is all going to lead? Is the left now intellectually bankrupt? Will Thatcherism save Brazil at the further expense of the poor? We look forward to a thoughtful discussion of these topics at the CUSLAR reunion.

- Bill Rogers

Bangkok, Thailand April 1990

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Cindy Crowner: CUSLAR in the 1970's From Chile to Nicaragua

My own involvement with CUSLAR began with the coup in Chile in 1973 and ended with the Mariel exodus from Cuba in the spring of 1980. Ours was an era of human rights struggles, efforts to cut off military aid to the "Cono Sur" (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay), resettling refugees from Chile and Argentina, opening relations and exchanges with Cuba, getting to know our brothers and sisters of Puerto Rico, making links between feminism and Latin American liberation struggles, networking with churches and other universities of the region to spread our solidarity work, and providing support for the Nicaraguan struggle against Somoza.

In 1974 the United States began to allow a limited number of Chilean political prisoners to be resettled in the US in lieu of serving time in Chilean prisons or in the stadium. One day, campus minister Bill Rogers, founder of CUSLAR, got a call from the National Council of Churches - where someone knew of his longstanding commitment to Latin America and human rights - asking if he or Cornell might sponsor a Chilean Presbyterian minister who had been arrested and was in the stadium. Of course we said yes, even though we had no money, nor a position for the man to fill. Bill and CUSLAR made up a job description to satisfy the State Department requirements. Without even having met the man, we said he would become the new director of CUSLAR.

The man who arrived turned out to be Joel Gajardo, one of the founders of Christians for Socialism in Chile and the first Protestant ever to teach at the radicalized Catholic University in Chile during the Allende years. He was brought to Ithaca through the efforts of Friends of Chile, a local ecumenical group that sponsored Chilean refugees and resettled them in Ithaca (see box). Among the Friends of Chile was Frances Barraclough, whose husband had worked during the Frei and Allende governments as an advisor on the land reform programs. He had left Chile before the coup and could not return; Frances and their 18 year old daughter Ana escaped after the coup, and the family had come to the United States. Frances had known Joel Gajardo in Chile, and highly recommended him.

Joel turned out to be a master communicator, a man with an incredible sensitivity to US church audiences, with theological and political acumen, and with tremendous commitment to converting the US public to Latin America's liberation. His wife, Joanna, later became a CUSLAR coordinator, and a leader in her own right during her years in Ithaca. She had been radicalized by her experiences in Chile and her political awareness was broadened by contact with feminists in Ithaca with whom she formed a chapter of Action for Women in Chile, which focused on the struggles of women political prisoners there.

Friends of Chile also resettled temporarily an Argentinian who had been a priest but later left his order, married, and was deeply involved in the church side of the liberation struggle in his country until he was threatened with imprisonment. He came to Cornell and we took him in. In 1975 he and Joel taught a course I took using Paolo Friere's pedagogy and bringing in Cornell professors from several disciplines to resource our class with research priorities chosen by the students! This was a very radical style and even some of the students didn't like the kind of power we were being given to determine our own course content. Others of us thrived and it was through that class that I became

Later in the 70's we organized a course open to the whole university community called "The International Economic Disorder Seminar"

a "true believer" in CUSLAR. Later in the 70's we organized a similar course open to the whole university community called "The International Economic Disorder Seminar" which went for two years and was cosponsored by the Eco-Justice Task Force.

After a year of working with Joel Gajardo and Bill Rogers as a CUSLAR member, they asked me if I would like to go to Latin America for a year to put some "meat on the bones of my latinamericanism." Of course I said yes, assuming that the alternative

was to wait tables at the State Diner after graduation. So two weeks after the 1975 graduation ceremony, I boarded a plane in Syracuse bound for Lima, Peru, a country of which I had no knowledge, but which had the reputation of being the center of liberation theology. In those days I wasn't much interested in the church except as a means for resettling refugees.

I arrived without speaking any Spanish, but found the contacts Joel and Bill had provided. Within a short amount of time, I was living in a communal house with refugee students from Chile, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Brazil along with one Peruvian. None of them were over 22 but exiled because of their involvement in student movements.

CUSLAR in any of their nations would have been banned. That year, our house became a meeting center and a sort of underground railroad station for students fleeing Chile and Argentina.

CUSLAR in any of their nations would have been banned. That year, our house became a meeting center and a sort of underground railroad station for students fleeing Chile and Argentina. I audited classes with Gustavo Gutierrez, the founder of liberation theology. Once my Spanish was up to it, I travelled for 3 months to Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia and made contact with the families of my exiled brothers and sisters in Peru. I learned about underground movements, underground churches, Christian base communities, and Christian commitment to the struggle for liberation. It was all very exciting, scary, and extremely challenging to my own commitment. I returned in April 1976. In June I took Joel's place as CUSLAR coordinator.

While Friends of Chile carried out its campaign to provide safety and relief to families traumatized by militarism in the "Cono Sur" CUSLAR was involved in the political side of the struggle, joining the national movement to cut military aid to Chile. We sent a delegation of students and community activists to national lobbying days in D.C. where we received training. Then we marched through the halls of Congress urging all kinds of Senators and Congresspersons to oppose further aid. I remember in particular entering the office of some congressman from New York City, named Ed Koch... At this point,

The Friends of Chile

The US officially promised to allow 500 Chilean political prisoners into the United States, as opposed to Canada, which admitted up to 15,000. In fact, the number who were granted entry into the US may have been as small as 350. The Friends of Chile worked on specific cases, drawing on the resources of local churches and of Cornell University to bring Chileans to Ithaca or to other communities in upstate New York.

Joel Gajardo and Joanna came with their three children, Daniel, Verónica and Andrés.

Alejandro Duarte ("Cupido") was in Ithaca briefly. He now works for the City of New York and lives on Staten Island.

Jorge Ramirez has two children, an 8 year old boy and a baby girl. He now works in construction in Rochester.

José N. Villa came in 1976. He married Ana Barraclough, and they have three children: Tito, 12, Tania, 9 and Gabriela, 5. He works in construction, and she is a psychiatric nurse at Wilford State Hospital.

Alejandro and Eliana Parra came in 1977 with their little boy. Alejandro (Jano) graduated from SUNY Cortland and now works as a chemist at Cornell. Eliana (Nana) is a member of the Moosewood Restaurant collective. Janito, now 14, was selected for the New York State Soccer Team, and Cati, born in Ithaca, is now 12 years old.

Leonardo and Cecilia Vargas came with their daughter Carla. Cecilia graduated in education from SUNY Cortland, and now works at The Alternative Community School. Leonardo is a graduate student in the PhD program in Sociology at SUNY Binghamton. Carla is now 15 years old, and Camila, born in Ithaca, is now 10.

Sergio and Miriam Elgueta first worked on a dairy farm near Cindy Crowner's family, then in Ithaca, and now live in Connecticut, where she is a nurse and he works in a factory. They have two daughters born in the United States.

Nelson Córdoba attended TC3 for a semester, then went to Rochester to study in a technical program. He has married and has two sons about 8 and 10 years old.

The friends of Chile also worked with Amnesty International on the case of Monica Gana, then on a hunger strike in Chile to protest the disappearance of her husband, Alan Bruce, and the lack of basic human rights. Cornell Graduate School gave her a tuition waiver, and she came to study in a Masters program in Human Ecology.

our group had gained some confidence and we told him in no uncertain terms that we expected him to oppose continued aid and why. After our self-righteous spiel, Mr. Koch quietly notified us that he was the sponsor of the bill to cut all aid to Uruguay. Oops!

This movement only took two years before we succeeded in 1976 when the Carter Administration suspended military assistance to Guatemala, Uruguay, and Chile due to violations of human rights in those nations. In those days we had direct telephone

In those days we had direct telephone contact with Pat Derian, the Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs under Carter. You can see how different it was to work in that sort of climate.

contact with Pat Derian, the Secretary for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs under Carter, the predecessor of Elliot Abrams. You can see how different it was to work in that sort of climate. This sort of contact was helpful in our Argentina campaign.

We launched a campaign to free an Argentinian physicist whose twin sister was a graduate student at Cornell. Her name was Elena Sevilla -detained by military police in 1976 at the hospital one day after she had given birth to her first child. She and the baby were taken to prison, the baby being released after 6 months to go live with grandparents. Elena's Cornellian sister Alicia worked with CUSLAR members and together we approached the Cornell physics department. Luckily members of the faculty were connected with human rights efforts on behalf of Soviet physicists such as Sakharov. They were plugged into national and international networks.

Before long, articles about Elena's case were carried in European and US scientific journals. Then Amnesty International adopted her case. Finally the New York Times carried a story about a delegation of US physicists, including Cornell's own Kurt Gottfreid, who went to Buenos Aires to ask the military president there about the status of many scientists held for their political convictions only, Elena being one. Soon thereafter, the State Department agreed to allow several hundred Argentinian political prisoners to come to the United States as exiles in lieu of serving their prison terms in their

native land. Rapidly, we organized ourselves along with the Friends of Chile, to arrange for Elena's arrival.

When Elena got off the plane at the Ithaca airport with her 2 year old son, whom she was with for the first time since he had been snatched from her in jail, we wept. The press was there to capture the moment when the twin sisters embraced after such a long nightmare. For me, it was the highlight of the work CUSLAR had done for a number of years. Cornell gave Elena a full scholarship and language classes so that she might continue her career as a physicist in this country. [She received a degree in Physics, married Paul Aho, and they now have a baby and live in Ithaca.]

CUSLAR attracted a motley crew. At times, we were divided along ideological lines. Once we suspected a member of being an FBI informer. We were college students, graduate and undergrad, Latin American, Hispanic American, and Anglo; we were high school students, Ithaca College students, and teachers from the community who'd spent time in Latin America and needed a support community. Some came to CUSLAR looking for a mate and figured they'd find critical thinkers there at least - a better chance than hanging out at the Palms. Lots of motives, lots of levels of political sophistication, and sometimes conflicts, though for the most part members carried out their work with lots of energy,

"I believe that the work was important because the focus at that time [1975-78] was not on Latin America, and needed to be. CUSLAR helped that happen. For me it was important because I had been in Brazil before and during my tenure with CUSLAR. It was community, action, memory and a link, even though I spoke that other Latin language. "My strongest memories are of meetings - and people in meetings. For all of us, the lessons of teamwork, organization, sharing, equality (with "uppity" women and strong-willed latinos) were amusing, amazing, difficult and long-lasting."

- Jill Lawrence

commitment, and reliability. One thing almost all of us had in common was our deep concern for Latin American liberation -and our love to party, which we did regularly!

One program that should not be forgotten was our outreach to Ithaca schools and area church youth groups. We developed some slideshows and written pieces and simulation games which we took to the young people in order to explain something of Latin American history (and of course the US role). Vicky Furio, a Spanish teacher, was particularly helpful in getting us into the schools and making contact with sympathetic teachers. Sometimes we'd take the Gajardo or Barraclough children with us to tell their stories of exile. In one elementary school we did a simulation game that left the kids with the option of either submitting to an unjust distribution of goodies (juice and bananas) or making revolution to get their fair share. You can imagine what happened. Then Ana Barraclough spoke of her experience as a refugee. The kids were so motivated that the next day they asked their teacher if they could write to our President and ask him to stop sending military aid to Chile.

The backbone of CUSLAR's educational effort was the monthly free film series which went on for all the years I was present with the organization. We also brought speakers through from all over the hemisphere. Little Flags Theater of Boston and the San Francisco Mime Troupe both came to Cornell presenting Latin American liberation oriented theater to Ithaca audiences under CUSLAR sponsorship and organization. Our newsletter went out to hundreds in those days fairly regularly. We held fundraising events -"Peñas" featuring empanadas made by the Chilean exiles. Our events were almost always well supported by the university community.

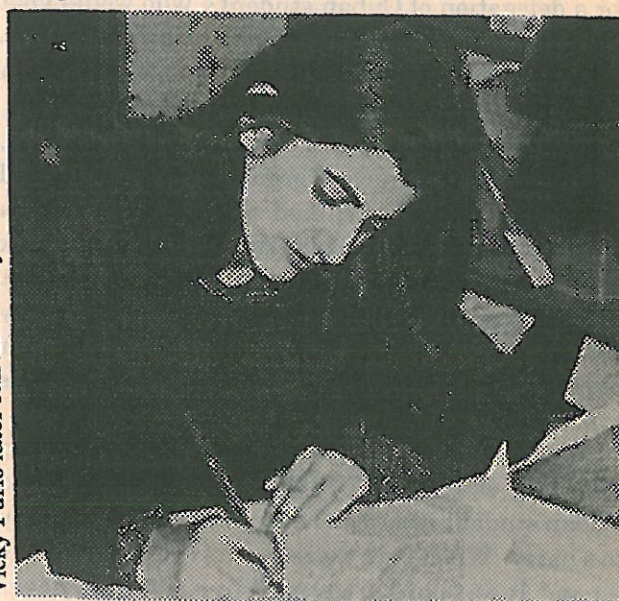
We did have one colossal failure, when we tried to organize a conference on US Policy and Human Rights in the Third World. We got blasted for not including human rights struggles in the USSR. The conference was cosponsored with other student organizations focussing on Africa and Asia and some of them didn't come through for lack of staff or commitment or whatever -it was a terrible conference!

We did take a multiracial group of students to the United Nations for a long weekend of touring, study, speeches, and simulation games on global politics. The Church Center at the UN helped put together the program. That was tremendous!

In 1977 Joel, Bill and I began to organize an

ecumenical regional organization called Mutuality in Mission. We joined together the regional bodies of the Baptists, United Churches of Christ, Presbyterians, and Methodists to form this organization whose goal was to bring Latin American pastors to teach us about the need for liberation and the positive role US churches could plan toward that end. Also we would send more student interns from our region whose mission would be modelled on my own: to go to Latin America for a year of learning in order to return and form solidarity organizations through the campus ministries of the campuses of upstate New York. I was in charge of this aspect of the project while Bill and Joel focused on the Church side of things.

Vicky Furio later ran Mutuality in Mission



During those years Margee Rogers, Vicki Furio, and Ed Griffin served as MIM interns in Costa Rica (during the insurrection in Nicaragua), Argentina (under military rule), and Chile (also under repressive conditions). After their one year to 15 month internships, these three returned to the States where we had set up campus ministry jobs for them at SUNY Binghamton, Oneonta State, and Syracuse University. They did what they could to organize students and church people following the CUSLAR model. Margee returned to Mexico where she married a man she'd met in Costa Rica. Vicki took my place at MIM after I left in 1980 and now she lives in Uruguay, where she feels more at home. Ed was the director of Witness for Peace in Managua for 3 years in the '80's.

In 1979 I was "forced upstairs" to assume the interim directorship of Mutuality in Mission as Joel had been snatched from us by the National Council

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

of Churches and Bill left for a parish job on Long Island. It was a rough year as I was in way over my head and I had loved the CUSLAR job!! But I also saw the potential of expanding the type of work CUSLAR was doing by putting my energy into MIM. I was still an active member of CUSLAR until I left Ithaca in May 1980.

As CUSLAR began to take more seriously the Nicaraguan struggle, and brought speakers from the FSLN to Cornell to speak and raise funds, MIM was asking me to focus on Cuba. In November of 1978 I had visited Cuba under the auspices of the World Student Christian Federation. In spring of 1980 Ed, Vicky, and I organized a fantastic itinerary for a delegation of Cuban students who would visit the US for the first time due to the new lenient policies of the Carter Administration. We had them lined up to go to prisons, farmworker camps, churches, shopping malls, a jazz concert, schools, women's and anti-nuclear groups, news media, and other universities. We had worked hard on this project, when in April of 1980 the Mariel exodus took place and over 100,000 Cubans flooded into the USA without papers. Needless to say, there was no way at that point that our delegation would be given papers by the US Customs. Our brilliant plan was cancelled.

I was scheduled to leave Ithaca for Berkeley on May Day of 1980. CUSLAR invited me and two Cuban student interns who were in the US already to a party. When I got there, it was a good-bye party for me! It was hard to say good-bye and I will never forget the innocent Cubans' reaction to meeting

Elena Sevilla and hearing her story and the stories of the Chilenos at that party. It was as if they had been sheltered from the reality so many of their brothers and sisters had suffered throughout the continent. God bless that innocence! Hay que defenderla.

Cindy Crowner

Berkeley, California March 1990

Well, that's it for now. There is a whole lot more. Names are missing: Peter Shiras, Tom Olson (master at guerrilla theater), Oscar Fernandez, Ramon Meneses (now with the FSLN in Managua), Jill Lawrence, Kate Pond, Jenny Helbraun, Kevin Healy, Bill Gasperini (Nicaragua correspondent for In These Times), Gracia Woodward, Mark Hansen, Marty Daniels and Cesar LaHoz, Arden, Mike Friedman, Elena Mora, Mary Rogers, Marisa, Sally Wessels, Mercedes, Betsy, John Uribe, John Gilbert, Ricardo Hausman and so many others whose names escape me! How I wish I could see you all again!

Come visit us out here and we'll catch up on our involvements in the '80's and '90's.



Mary Jo Dudley: CUSLAR in the 1980's Focus on Central America

The victory of the FSLN (the Sandinista National Liberation Front) in Nicaragua on July 19, 1979 brought new energy and enthusiasm to the Upstate New York area for organizing around Latin American issues. CUSLAR became viewed, in the Upstate area, as the major resource center for those who were interested in Latin America. Often CUSLAR shared visiting speakers with other organizations in Rochester, Buffalo, Cortland, Binghamton, and Syracuse. These efforts encouraged the formation of new solidarity groups throughout the region. In 1978, I became the coordinator for a community based solidarity group in Rochester, the Rochester Committee on Latin America (ROCLA).

In 1980, CUSLAR and MIM sponsored the first meeting of the Upstate Latin American Solidarity Network. Those involved agreed that since

CUSLAR had both financial and educational resources available, these resources would be shared throughout the Upstate area. As a regional network, we also coordinated our participation in national meetings of the Nicaragua Network, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), and later the Network in Solidarity with Guatemala (NISGUA).

CUSLAR and MIM produced and purchased slideshows on Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala which were shared among members of the Upstate Network.

While most of our educational efforts focused on reaching those people who had not previously been informed on events in Central America, we also carried out legislative campaigns, and organized rallies aimed at changing U.S. policies toward Latin America.

In January of 1981, I was selected as the Upstate Network representative to the Primer Encuentro Internacional de Solidaridad (the First

International Solidarity Meeting) held in Managua, Nicaragua. At the "Encuentro", political activists from around the world discussed how we could support the Nicaraguan people in their struggle to initiate programs for economic and political restructuring. I came away from Nicaragua totally dedicated to doing whatever was possible to give our financial and political support to the Nicaraguan revolution. Upon my return from the Encuentro, I was asked to begin work on the first Pueblo a Pueblo (People to People) work/study brigade project with CASA Boston. Our goal was to send about 40 people to Nicaragua representing various sectors of our

communities in Upstate N.Y. and Boston. The organization of this event was well under way when I applied for the position of CUSLAR Coordinator.

In July of 1981, I left Rochester to take the

place of Marty Daniels who had been serving as the CUSLAR coordinator during the previous year. At that time CUSLAR was made up of a strong core of dedicated activists with one very dedicated work-study student, José Lobo (he was supposed to be "part time", but every one knows that nothing in CUSLAR is "part time"). We began the semester

with a film series on Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, a very successful Peña, and an all day teach-in on Guatemala. During the spring semester, the year before I came to CUSLAR, events in El

Salvador had brought many new faces to the group. CUSLAR no longer faced the problem of having too few members, but then faced the difficulty of finding ways for all those interested to be involved in a meaningful way. We worked very closely with MIM, especially Vicky Furio and Ron Place who were working down the hall in G-29 (we were in G-17 for most of the year and then relocated to G-27).

I came away from Nicaragua totally dedicated to doing whatever was possible to give our financial and political support to the Nicaraguan revolution.

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People to People Brigade

During the fall of 1981, the plans for the Nicaraguan work brigade gained momentum and we arranged to be in Nicaragua in January of 1982. Throughout the fall Ithacans and other "Upstaters" studied, met, discussed our goals, and began furiously fundraising for the project. In Nicaragua we spoke with the Directors of the Ministries of Health and Education, the Sandinista Workers Central Union (CST), the Nicaraguan women's association (AMNLAE), and the neighborhood based Sandinista Defense Committees.

Our political work was cut out for us when we returned to the States and began to write, talk with the local media, and share our slideshow with people throughout the Northeast. These "people to people" connections were to become very important for our work in pressuring for changes in the U.S. policy towards Nicaragua through the 1980's. The Nicaragua Network agreed that work brigades should be encouraged throughout the U.S. and we began to prepare for brigades for January 1983. We produce a wide variety of materials on "why go to Nicaragua" and "how to organize Nicaraguan work brigades" and by the end of 1982, over 100 people had signed up to go to Nicaragua with the next brigade.



Women on Construction Brigade in Nicaragua

Locally the "Pueblo a Pueblo" efforts led to CUSLAR's integration of new sectors of our small community in solidarity activities. Our weekly meetings were altered to accommodate working mothers with children, and the Monday night CUSLAR meetings became all night affairs. Even

though we began the meetings at 5 P.M. (O.K., I admit we did have a tendency to start a little late), members rotated the responsibility for preparing dinner for all who attended the meetings, and child care was provided. After the business part of the meeting, subcommittees would meet to work on the projects that the group had prioritized during the meeting. Our subcommittee structure sometimes focused on events, and other times focused on ongoing campaigns or types of outreach (film, media, legislative, urgent actions, religious, schools).

The Prison Project

Throughout 1981 and 1982 we continued to work on the CUSLAR prison project that was started in 1980. On every other Thursday, a group of CUSLAR members would travel to the Elmira Correctional Facility to share ideas, films, slide-shows, and conversation with a group of Latino inmates. Most of them were young men from the N.Y.C. area who had been involved in gangs and drugs. During our visits, they discussed with us the idea of producing a play that one of them had written about their experiences that led up to their incarceration. We were responsible for providing the materials for the sets, people to help them paint, and women who could play the female roles in the play. Probably our most important contribution was the excuse to meet and discuss their plans in Spanish. Three weeks before the production, a fight broke out on the basketball court and the latinos were told that their group had to be disbanded and that they would not be allowed to participate in Family Day. CUSLAR members received a polite phone call informing us that our visits would no longer be permitted.

Educational Focus on El Salvador

During the Spring of 1982, El Salvador was in the news. Tommie Sue Montgomery, the author of Revolution in El Salvador was teaching at Ithaca College and a regular at CUSLAR events. We worked together to intensify our educational outreach on El Salvador in the schools and local churches. We established a regular routine of sharing CUSLAR speakers with local Spanish and history teachers at the high school and held several public forums in local churches. The international repudiation of the killing of Archbishop Oscar Romero echoed throughout the country and on the first anniversary of his death, Central America Week was celebrated in small towns and large cities

around the U.S. On March 27, 1982 CUSLAR organized several buses to take Ithacans to the massive Washington rally to "Stop the U.S. War in El Salvador." The message that united thousands was to "fund jobs and human needs, not massacres in El Salvador."

CUSLAR organized local rallies on El Salvador that were also well attended. The Ithaca peace groups organized a rally as part of Survival Week and invited a CUSLAR sponsored Salvadoran labor leader, Felipe Catevo, to speak. The connection between religious, peace, political and human rights organizations in Ithaca was becoming very strong. Our year was full with teach-ins, visiting trade unionists, doctors, and journalists, and a constant flow of visitors and letters to congressional offices. One speaker who will always remain in my memory was Lucio Lleras, a representative from the Cero a la Izquierda Salvadorean film collective and member of the Radio Venceremos System (the media arm of the FDR/FMLN). He shared with us a slice of his daily life as a radio and film technician in the war zones of El Salvador and talked about the production of Decision to Win, the first film made by an all Salvadorean crew about the revolutionary process in El Salvador. He gave us an intelligent and honest perspective on the effect our educational work in the U.S. could have on daily life in El Salvador.

Another important visit was that of Dr. Charles Clements. He came to the area to talk about his personal experience as a "career military man" who had become highly politicized as a result of his participation as a pilot in Vietnam. He was the first U.S. doctor to volunteer to serve in the war torn areas of El Salvador as a doctor for the FMLN. His life experience was an inspiration for many. As a result of his moving presentation several members of the audience came to CUSLAR to find out what they could do to stop the U.S. support for the ruthless Salvadoran Army.

The war in El Salvador had affected all sectors of the Salvadoran population. Dave Dyson, the director of the Union Labor Department of the ACTWU came to Cornell to talk about "El Salvador: Labor, Terror, and Peace." He spoke to trade unionist about the need to become involved with the movement in opposition to prevailing U.S. policies. His visit, as well as previous visits of trade unionists, reinforced the need for CUSLAR members to show solidarity with the struggle of trade unionists in our community. In 1981, CUSLAR members had joined the UAW in their struggle for fair wages, and later



Young Ithacans express their opinion

CUSLAR members joined the Cargill workers in their struggle to ensure safe working conditions for the miners.

Other Salvadorans who were invited by CUSLAR included Ernesto Vela, the former Dean of Arts and Sciences at the National University in San Salvador who addressed "The Role of the Intellectual in El Salvador", Wendy Schaul, the first American journalist to live with the guerillas for 11 months in El Salvador, and Father José Alas, an exiled Salvadoran priest who spoke on the role of liberation theology in bringing about change in Central America.

CUSLAR's work was strongly influenced by the presence of several Salvadoran refugees who were living in sanctuary in the upstate area. Alejandro Rodriguez, an exiled Salvadoran trade unionist living in sanctuary in Rochester came to Ithaca several times in 1985 to speak to members of the local religious communities and trade unions. His moving presentations encouraged many members of the religious community to take a stronger position with regard to El Salvador and to get involved with local sanctuary efforts. The Ithaca Area Sanctuary Committee was at that time supporting Esperanza and her new baby Mayra. Later the committee brought Juan, a Salvadoran "campesino" who had been accused of being a subversive after participating in a march. Juan shared his story of the military's murder of his two eldest sons, his later imprisonment, and his eventual trek across Central America to find sanctuary in the U.S.

In 1986, I travelled to El Salvador as part of a human rights delegation and returned to Ithaca

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

with detailed information on the persecution of political and human rights activists. Through public presentations of this information new interest and energy were generated for redirecting our work. While in El Salvador I was deeply impressed by the level of organization among Salvadoran students and others in an environment of terror. At the height of local divestment activities, CUSLAR helped coordinate a joint tour of Don Ngubeni, a South African student leader, and Julio Sosa, a Salvadoran student leader. They addressed a large Cornell audience about the connection between student organization around the world and emphasized the need to coordinate divestment and anti-intervention activities at the local level.



Ithacans March in Washington

Guatemala Focused Activities

At the same time as the Salvadoran elections, that brought Roberto d'Aubuisson, well known leader of the right wing death squads, to the position of head of the Assembly, dubious elections in Guatemala led to a coup that resulted in the leadership of the country being put in the hands of General Efraín Ríos Montt, a dictator who pledged to wipe out the guerillas in a year. CUSLAR brought José Efraín Rosales, a Guatemalan Quiché Indian who had survived a Guatemala Army massacre, to the Upstate area to talk about the U.S.-backed counter-insurgency strategy that was being implemented in his country. He also talked about the role of the CIA throughout Latin America.

On the heels of Efraín's visit to Ithaca, the CIA scheduled their annual recruiting session on the Cornell campus. CUSLAR members and other students protested their visit with informational leaflets on past CIA activities in Chile, Iran, Ecuador, Sudan, Cuba, Ghana, Brazil, Syria, the Domini-

can Republic, and Guatemala. This protest set a precedent for future CIA visits. After the CIA information session was closed by protesters, future CIA visits were organized with closed sessions requiring student applications in advance.

Throughout the 1980's various Guatemalan human rights activists came to the area to talk about the brutality of the Guatemalan army and the increasing strength of the popular movement. Perhaps the strongest of those visitors was Rigoberta Menchu, who shared her personal story while giving a peek at the hope that Guatemalans hold strong in their struggle for peace and economic justice in Guatemala. Throughout this period until the present CUSLAR continues to work closely with NISGUA (Network in Solidarity with Guatemala) and works actively as part of the rapid response human rights network.

Nicaragua Focused Activities

During the early years of the Nicaraguan revolution, there was a tendency among CUSLAR members and others to support all FSLN projects just on the merit that they were "revolutionary", but as time went on it became clear that our critical support would allow us to have a deeper understanding of our work. As part of our speakers series we worked with other local groups to bring speakers who could inform us of the internal debates in Nicaragua. Nicaraguan religious leaders who came to Ithaca to talk about the role of the church in Nicaragua included: Carlos Escorcia, a Nicaraguan Protestant leader who spoke on the tensions between protestant church leaders and the Sandinista government, and Rev. Norman Bent, a Miskitu Indian and Moravian Pastor who addressed the Miskitu/Sandinista conflict in Nicaragua.

CUSLAR collaborated with the American Indian Program at Cornell to bring Vernon Bellecourt, a leader of the American Indian Movement to talk on "The Status of Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples of Central America with Special Reference on the Miskito in Nicaragua." Throughout the early 1980's CUSLAR continued to address this issue with subsequent discussions with Ted McDonald of Cultural Survival who was in Nicaragua during some of the Miskito/Nicaraguan government negotiations and with José Barreiro, a journalist who worked at the Cornell American Indian Program. The CUSLAR Newsletter article, "Critical Support of a Revolution Within: The Struggle for Indigenous Rights in Nicaragua" was viewed by many as an important and

well researched piece which could help similar groups around the country to honestly evaluate Miskito/FSLN relations.

CUSLAR was very actively involved in getting out an alternative view to that presented in the press to our community. Local folks who had traveled to Nicaragua organized slide show presentations in schools, churches, and the local food cooperative. The business community aided these efforts by helping with fundraising activities for material aid to Central America, and both high school and university students donated books, pencils, notebooks and other school supplies to our campaign for material aid to Nicaragua. A delegation of ACS high school students traveled to Managua to exchange ideas with Nicaraguan students.

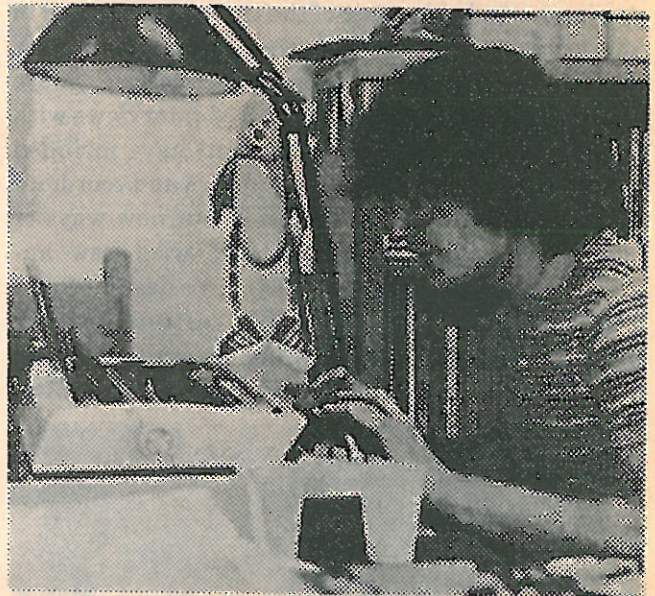
To further our understanding of some of the areas of internal debate, CUSLAR invited several high level officials from Nicaragua to present an official view of the Sandinista political and economic projects. These speakers included: Magda Enriquez, a member of Nicaragua's Council of State and representative and founding member of AMNLAE (the Nicaraguan women's organization), Ivan Arenco, the director of the Statistics Department in Nicaragua's Ministry of Agriculture, and Lataro Sandino, a member of the Sandinista Youth. Our major activity on Nicaragua in 1984 was a pre-election forum with candidates from the four major political parties running in the 1984 elections. It was clear from their presentations that political parties that were both to the left and to the right of the Sandinistas were campaigning on equal grounds with the FSLN. One of the Latin America Studies Association official observers of the election, Dr. Paul Dougherty of the University of Florida, later confirmed our belief that the 1984 Nicaraguan elections were free and fair.

Throughout 1985 and 1986, the reports of Contra atrocities increased. Judith McDaniel, a member of the Witness for Peace delegation that was kidnapped by the contras, came to Ithaca to talk about their real role in Nicaragua. As the Cornell Republicans increased their public attacks of CUSLAR on campus, CUSLAR proposed that there be a public debate between the two groups regarding Contra aid. The republicans never showed up at the event. However, they did arrange a visit of a contra spokesperson at Cornell, and when John Linder came to speak about his brother Ben's murder by the contras in the fall of 1987, one well known local contra supporter came to the event to say that he didn't

believe that John was telling the truth. When Edgar Chamorro, recruited by the CIA to be the political leader of the FDN (contras) came to Cornell to talk about why he left the contras, again the young republicans claimed that he was lying.

Over 900 Ithacans signed the Pledge of Resistance, a national effort to resist any U.S. assistance to the contras or any other attempt to overthrow the democratically elected Nicaraguan government. As part of the local Pledge of Resistance, a day long workshop was held on civil disobedience. On the day of the CIA's visit to Cornell, several people who had signed the Pledge organized a moving funeral procession for all those Nicaraguans who had been killed as part of CIA programs in Central America.

After several unsuccessful attempts on the part of the group to communicate with Senator Alphonse D'Amato, a sit-in was scheduled for his office. During the sit-in several CUSLAR members were arrested and later spent varying amounts of time in jail. They were supported by many people. Among them was John Stockwell, a former CIA Chief, who addressed the court during their sentencing.



José "Ñoño" Lobo hard at work

Throughout the decade the kind of support Ithacans offered to Nicaragua took many forms. Some ex-Cuslareños have spent extensive periods of time in Nicaragua and the number of local people who have traveled to Nicaragua continues to grow. Now at the end of the decade there is a significantly larger group of local "folks" who have seen Nicaragua for themselves and who can quickly detect the hypocrisy and lies that appear again and again in the U.S. press.

"CUSLAR hizo marchas, campañas de cabildeo, educación, protestas y reuniones durante mi epoca en Cornell (1979-81). Sin duda fue muy relevante en el momento histórico y gracias a acciones como las de CUSLAR no se han dado mayores intervenciones en Latino América por parte del gobierno de EE.UU. Para mí fue importante, por la oportunidad de expresar mis ideas de forma concreta y por poder compartir con los correligionarios en la lucha. Siempre me recuerdo del día que se formó una vez que alguien trató de que CUSLAR se definiese ideológicamente; fue un encuentro bien animado..."
- Daniel Melendez

A Broad Range of Work

In 1986, CUSLAR members joined others in taking control over some of the images presented in our local press when I and others began to work as part of the local progressive news collective, "More Than the News." We have included interviews with many of our visiting speakers and have included opinion pieces by CUSLAR members and coordinators. In the 1980's we learned about new ways of doing our educational work and tried new approaches to local political action. We designed and redesigned the newsletter. We restructured our meetings and way of functioning several times, and we tried to work with new sectors of our community.



Wally Babcock and the Newsletter

Sometimes we were successful and sometimes we failed miserably, but I think we always continued to grow politically and we touched many lives in the area and in Latin America.

Any article about CUSLAR which only included activities about Central America would misrepresent the heart of CUSLAR, its focus on all of Latin America. Our activities and campaigns reflected the group's desire to maintain a broad Latin American emphasis rather than working on one country, region or area. CUSLAR invited speakers and organized conferences on Haiti, Coca and Cocaine in the Americas, Latin American Popular Culture, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Grenada, Jamaica, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and Chile. We also organized study groups on Cuba, homosexuality in Latin America, Chile, womens' struggles in Latin America, the militarization of Honduras, CIA activities in Latin America, popular movements in Guatemala, U.S. military maneuvers in Puerto Rico, and U.S.-Israeli military cooperation in Central America. The newsletter committee worked hard to ensure that the articles covered issues of importance throughout Latin America, and we produced fact sheets on most Latin American countries throughout that ten year period.

Throughout the years we worked with and supported other groups who were working on similar issues: Tompkins County Coalition for Peace and Justice in Central America, Friends of Chile, The Chilean Solidarity Group, The Emergency Coalition for Nicaragua, Friends of Nicaragua, the Ithaca Area Sanctuary Committee, The Ithaca Sister City Project, and the Emergency Coalition for El Salvador. During this ten year period we received support for our efforts from several local businesses: RIO, Moosewood, Smedley's, Somadhara, Borealis Books, the Latin American Book Store, and the ABC.

CUSLAR had a social role as well. CUSLAR became well known for our parties, dances, peñas, cafe conciertos, art exhibits, and marches in Washington, on the Ithaca Commons, and on the Cornell campus. We organized vigils, fasts, and guerrilla theater actions (some people still don't know how we got that green military van when the "Salvadoran death squads" "kidnapped" several professors and students). Our fundraising efforts included brunches, pizza sales, rummage sales and many raffles. As a result of our material aid campaigns, we raised funds for human rights organizations in Chile, medical aid for El Salvador, Nicaragua, and

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

Guatemala, a peasant women's organization in Bolivia, and several other grass roots efforts. Direct aid efforts allowed us to send books, notebooks, syringes, bandages, medical cots, tools, toys, and lots of aspirin to Nicaragua.

I realize that this article leaves out much of what CUSLAR was during the 1980's. The most obvious omission is the names and faces of all those people who "were" CUSLAR. I applaud all those individuals who were willing to put up just one more poster, or sit through one more long meeting. We wouldn't have continued for 25 years if we hadn't been able to count on each other for passing one more petition, baking or delivering pizzas in the rain or heat, passing the can at yet another movie, delivering the press releases at midnight, or struggling over writing a fact sheet or newsletter article. For me CUSLAR was strong because its members were dedicated and flexible. Certainly all those people who I met through CUSLAR changed my life. As a coordinator of CUSLAR I was forced to learn patience, silence, strength, political struggle, and flexibility. On the personal level CUSLAR was a life style, a total focus for my life.

- Mary Jo Dudley
Ithaca, New York May 1990

I'm hesitant to list one name and not the others but any article about CUSLAR in the 1980's would be incomplete if it didn't acknowledge the long hours and hard work of: José (Noño) Lobo, Marge Bayer, Peter Shiras, Rob Pfaff, Bill Fisher, Monique Sessler, Claudio Buchwald, Carolyn Mow, Donna Mandel, Donna Goldstein, Vicky Furio, Mike Burchardt, Nina Shiskoff, Bill Gasperini, Wally Babcock, Anne Posel, Maurice Belanger, Paolo Lipari, Theresa Grady, Cesar La Hoz, Lisa Geduldig, Rogerio, Beatriz Fernandes, Daniel Salas, Ann Peters, Lory Peck, Daniel Melendez, Freddy Roncalla, Jorge and Nana Recharte, Leonardo and Cecilia Vargas, Michael Cohen, Joan Gibson, Jano and Nana Parra, José and Ana Villa, Geoff and Joanna Spurling, Debby, Radha, and Tai Hernandez-Pacini,

Jonathan Wyland, Bob Green, Neil Goldsman, Jim Ferwerda, Miles Latham, Steve Peggs, Rachel Kreier, Lillian Hall, Alison Field, Penny Kukuk, Ricky Polakoff, Pierre Laramie, Luis Rojas, Cesar Ayala, Nadia Benavid, Fouad Makki, Raul Cabrera, Ana Morales, John Hollister, David Whitehouse, Brett Beemyn, Carmen Blankenship, Leonore Olmstead, Steve Emerman, Sally Lockwood, Bruce Tyler, Kathy Simmonds, Eric Kramer, Karen Cowgill, William Sunderland, David Moyre, Gail Rowe, Fred Palmer, Jane Mt Pleasant, Judy Kolva, Guy Monteleone, Chris McConkey, Greg Rucio, Bob Malone, Sally Wessels, Bob Love, Carl Feuer, Robin Whittlesey, Alice Wood, Fay Gougakis, John Milich, Rosie Vanek, Shannon Turner-Covell, David Berrian, Stan Jackson, Myriam Figueroa, Nerylu Figueroa, Jill Lawrenz, Keith Anderson, Lori Peters, Luin Goldring, Gil Neiger, Cindy Morrison, David Morales, Deb Whiter, Ed Peterson, Ellen Alexander, Eric Patterson, Ellen Baer, Rick Rogers, Julie Albertson, Barb Lynch, Linda Russo, Carlos Castellanos, Steve Jackson, Steven Zunes, Jodi Parker, Eduardo Gomez, Cathy O'Neill, and Andy Singer. I'm sure I've forgotten some important CUSLAR folks, but.... as you all know, we CUSLAR coordinators are imperfect.

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Joanna Gajardo: *On Solidarity and the Women's Movement*

After leaving CUSLAR in 1980 and coming to live in New York City, I took the position of administrative assistant to the Latin America/Caribbean Liaison Officer of the Presbyterian Church (USA). This gave me the opportunity to continue being in touch with persons I knew from other Latin American countries who came to Chile during the Popular Unity.

One of the most exciting moments was getting the news first hand about the 1986 Pastoral Letter signed by the member churches of the Co-Fraternity of Evangelical Churches in Chile and hand delivered to General Pinochet, in which concern was raised about the increase of the repression and the worsening economic situation for the majority of the people. This was the first time that an ecclesiastical institution outside of the Roman Catholic Church had made a public declaration denouncing the military regime's policies - and was even covered by the media.

Another highlight of the past decade was being able to attend the 1985 United Nations' Non-Governmental Organization Women's Decade Conference in Nairobi, Kenya, as a representative for Women's International Resource Exchange (WIRE). I became

involved with WIRE immediately upon arriving in New York City, and still I am a member. WIRE is a small, non-profit women's collective which is committed to reprinting and distributing information on and analyses of the problems, struggles and achievements of women in the Third World. We research and evaluate articles written by women in Latin America, Asia and Africa. I have also written two articles which WIRE published. "Is the Personal Political or the Political Personal?" (Spanish) based on my experiences with women and political parties, and "Has the U.N. Decade Done Anything for Women in Latin America" (English) taken from material and interviews I collected in Nairobi.

Another organization I have been active in is the New York Chile Human Rights Group. Its main

focus has been education and raising funds for grassroots organizations in Chile, such as the Committee of the rights of the People (CODEPU), the Committee for Women's Rights (CODEM), and a health clinic in one of the many shanty towns surrounding Santiago.

With the increasing US involvement in Central America it has been very difficult to keep up interest in Chile's situation, and now with the "new democracy" having been elected even more so. What is very disappointing is that the Chilean women who have always been in the forefront of the struggle against the 17 year dictatorship are not being taken seriously by the Allwyn administration. Women were the first in bringing the plight of the disappeared into the open. They were the ones who organized the Committees of the Families of political Prisoners, the Committee for the Return of Exiles, the soup kitchens and a myriad of other activities. Women were also the majority in all the massive demonstrations carrying slogans saying

"Democracy in the country and at home." Yet the political platform of the new "democratic" government has not taken into account any of their demands. Political parties/coalitions throughout history have

Political parties/coalitions throughout history have used women as a means toward achieving their goals, and then pushed them aside once these are obtained.

used women as a means toward achieving their goals, and then pushed them aside once these are obtained.

I am currently working with the Women in Mission and Ministry Unit at the Episcopal Church Center, actively participating in the Ecumenical Decade "Churches in Solidarity with Women." This project was launched in 1988 by the World Council of Churches in response to the U.N. Decade, urging member churches "to eliminate teachings and practices that discriminate against women as a response to the Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women adopted by the 1985 U.N. Conference in Nairobi."

Do we need to keep on drawing attention to

women's issues? Was the U.N. Decade for Women enough? Five years after the end of the U.N. Decade, I attended a meeting organized by the New York City Commission on the Status of Women to answer these questions. Unfortunately there was consensus by all of the keynote speakers representing different areas worldwide, although many of us had hoped the U.N. Decade would effect a radical improvement of women's conditions, the majority of women today face even more difficult conditions than they did 15-20 years ago. Increased military spending and injustices in the economic systems, i.e. the national debt crisis and the activities of the international financial cartels, have worsened the situation. In addition, the globally dominant patriarchal structures are still accepted as "natural" by all cultures.

The Sandinista government in Nicaragua did much through education and legislation to begin to create an awareness of women's discrimination and sexist stereotypes. However, AMNLAE, the national women's organization which had representation in government, recognized that it takes much more than that to change the patriarchal values, written and non-written, which permeate society, families and individuals.

I challenge CUSLAR that from now on as you plan your short and long range programs you begin to raise consciousness regarding the situation of women in the Americas. Are the so-called return to democratic forms of government really taking into account the needs of over half of the population? Such as:

- In times of economic difficulties, women are among the first to lose their jobs, the largest percentage of them being heads of households.

- Women industrial workers are often without protection and are paid the lowest wages by local and multinational industries which exploit their vulnerable position in society.

- Though women's labor tills, cares for and harvests a high percentage of all crops, women in rural areas receive least attention in development plans and are not consulted about their basic needs.

- Among the victims of nuclear testing and the misuse of chemical products are women who bear the burden of increased miscarriages and/or the rearing of malformed children.

- Apartheid and other forms of racism oppress women differently, often subjecting them to double and triple oppression - as women, as belonging to a

discriminated race, and as poor people.

- Poverty, famine and war strike women hardest because they carry the heaviest responsibility for their families. Year after year there is an increase of abandoned children roaming the streets of Latin American cities because of unwanted pregnancies, unemployment, illness, death.

- As socio-economic conditions deteriorate, and men's despair and frustration grow, the level of sexual abuse and violence against women and children rises correspondingly.

- Growing hunger, the spread of military bases and sex-tourism encourages the growth of prostitution involving ever younger girls and boys, producing an ever widening spread of AIDS.

- Women's organizations and projects only receive an average of 1% of funding resources available from funding institutions both secular and ecclesiastical.

I could go on naming many more issues, but in the light of the above it is clear that much remains to be done. The struggle continues!!! The struggle for human rights, and socio-economic-political equity must involve, empower and be in solidarity with women, if you want CUSLAR to continue to thrive for another 10 years. At the same time, let us also clean up our own act, and denounce hierarchy and oppression of women within our own structures at all levels, wherever each one of us may work, live, or play. Our human relationships today should reflect the kind of society we envision tomorrow as we struggle for the liberation/emancipation of all peoples.

- Joanna Gajardo

New York City April 1990

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Bill Gasparini: REFLECTIONS ON MY INVOLVEMENT IN CUSLAR,

or How CUSLAR was perhaps the major influence on everything I have done since Cornell.

There have been two key turning points in my life, moments which in retrospect you realize have profoundly influenced everything which came afterwards.

The first turning point was in 1975 when I received a letter from the international youth exchange organization ICYE that Brazil was the country I was going to live and work in as a social worker for at least a year.

Up to that time I had had little contact with, or knowledge of, Latin America. I eventually spent close to two years living and working in slum areas of two cities in Brazil, an experience which opened the door to my involvement in the region.

The second major turning point was meeting Cindy Crouner at an event in the auditorium of Anabel Taylor Hall soon after I arrived at Cornell in the fall of 1978. Hearing of my Brazil experiences, she told me of a group called CUSLAR for people interested in Latin America, and especially U.S. relations with the region.

Attending those first several meetings, few people seemed keen on talking about events in Brazil. But very quickly I was caught up in learning about what was happening in Nicaragua.

Here it is nearly 12 years later, and I have been living in Nicaragua for over half of that time. My involvement with this country, indeed my very life since 1978, is due almost entirely to my having been a member of CUSLAR in the late 1970's.

When I think back on the two years I spent at Cornell, I am hard put to recall what classes I took, let alone what I learned or took away from the Rural Sociology department. Of course, certain key professors do stand out, as do some classroom discussions, etc.

But all of this pales when compared with the weekly 4:30 meetings in Anabel Taylor G-17 where

we would thrash out our thoughts on what was happening in Latin America, plan movies or speaking events to try and inform the great bulk of uninformed Cornell students about the area, write for the CUSLAR NEWSLETTER (my beginnings in journalism!) and — most important of all — form lasting friendships.

There was something about both the organization and the people involved in CUSLAR that stood out above the rest of my experiences at Cornell. Without a doubt CUSLAR became the most significant part of the my existence at Cornell; if much of what one gains from attending college is social interaction, especially promoting bonds between people with like interests, CUSLAR was that vehicle for me.

Having lived outside the U.S. now for these last years I hadn't even remembered that 1990 marks the 10th anniversary of my graduation, and that I could attend Cornell's "alumni weekend." But the only reunion I would be at all interested in attending would be the one proposed for CUSLAR people.

To backtrack a bit, I'll pick up where Cornell and CUSLAR left off. After graduation I spent the summer of 1980 in Tabasco, Mexico, working as an assistant to several professors in an ecological research project. I supposedly had a job working with

a Rural Sociology prof back in Ithaca that fall, but my disillusionment with academia set in that summer.

As with most of my Cornell professors, I felt that most academics were driven by the "publish or

perish" principle. The pressures of academia seemed to force them into a different world, where only their colleagues would read the results of research. Most of the people in my department at Cornell were more involved in conducting regression analyses on U.S. AID-funded contracts than in talking about what I considered to be the real issues,

What did the reality of a place like Nicaragua have to do with regression analyses, I wondered. And I realized that the attraction of all those CUSLAR meetings had been to try and find out.

such as (at that time) people fighting to throw off the yoke of imperialism in the Nicaraguan Revolution.

What did the reality of a place like Nicaragua have to do with regression analyses, I wondered. And I realized that the attraction of all those CUSLAR meetings had been to try and find out.

Hence I decided to abandon the academic route and eventually found journalism, which I felt was better way of reaching lay people about what I felt were the real issues. When I hear people from obscure corners of the country say they hear me on the radio, or read newspaper stories, I feel that maybe I've attained my overall goal of reaching them in some way, even if that's just to say they know that a place called Nicaragua exists.

After that summer in Mexico the pull of Nicaragua was stronger than a possible job back at Cornell, and I made my way down here for the first time to spend a wonderful month in the era when people were still flush with the euphoria of victory. I considered staying to live, but finally decided to explore the other countries of Central America before finally making my way to Oakland, California.

There I roomed with CUSLAR friend Mark Hansen for several years, translating for the Spanish-language InterPress news service and later teaching in a bilingual school/children's center in Oakland's progressive Chicano community known as the Centro Infantil de la Raza.

I worked in Bay area solidarity groups such as Nicaraguan Interfaith Committee for Action (NICA) and East Bay People Aiding Nicaragua (PAN), but eventually drifted out of solidarity activities and back south, to Cuba and Nicaragua again for a six-week visit in 1982.

It was on a third trip to Nicaragua for a New Song Festival in April 1983 that I finally decided I had to return to live. As the cries of the chant "NO PASARAN!" echoed around Managua's Lake Tiscapa during the festival, and the Contras had definitely taken on a very menacing form, I knew my place was here rather than in the U.S. The goal was to try and inform the North American public what I believed to be the truth about what was going on in Central America, particularly when misinformation under Reaganism was at its height.

I arrived in Nicaragua to live in early 1984, just as the country was caught up in celebrating the 50th

anniversary of the death of guerrilla leader Augusto Cesar Sandino. I worked initially with the Institute for Socio-Economic Studies (INIES), but as it was an election year with so much happening and far too many places to explore, within a year I had left the INIES office to free-lance for IN THESE TIMES and Pacifica Radio.

Therein began this odyssey of adventure which inevitably constitutes life as a journalist in Central America. High points were the 1984 election campaign and the obvious U.S. attempts to delegitimize it, culminating in the tension-filled "MIG crisis", the incredible drama of the Miskito and Sumu Indians, especially the first peace accords allowing their return to the Coco River area in 1985; and being kidnapped by ARDE Contras while accompanying a "Witness for Peace" group along the San Juan River border with Costa Rica. This allowed a first encounter with the Contras in the field.

As time went on I became more regional, ranging out to cover elections and the war in El Salvador, presidential summit meetings in the "Esquipulas

The goal was to try and inform the North American public what I believed to be the truth about what was going on in Central America, particularly when misinformation under Reaganism was at its height.

II" peace process, Contra activities in Honduras, the 1985 Mexico City earthquake, the situation of refugees and the highland indigenous peoples of Guatemala. I took a long "sabbatical" by leaving for Asia in

1986, covering events in India, Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. But in spirit I never really left Central America for very long.

These past two years I have also travelled a fair amount, working primarily for CBS Radio and the Christian Science Monitor among other media. The range has been roughly from Cuba to Colombia, reporting on events such as Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Havana, the Arnaldo Ochoa drug smuggling trial, cocaine cartel bombings in Bogota and the Cartagena "drug summit", the FMLN offensive in San Salvador last November, and finally election violence and the U.S. invasion of Panama. The farthest-flung points have been Peru, the aftermath of the coup d'etat in Paraguay, and brief visits to Buenos Aires and La Paz, Bolivia.

From these places, however, it's always been gratifying to return to Managua, this city destroyed by earthquake, revolution and economic hardship, which has become a supportive home base.

Nicaragua has always been a place of surprises,

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

of people and events caught up in a massive social experiment characterized by much hope but also great tragedy. These include victims of brutal Contra attacks, impoverished campesinos, soldiers with their AK-47's, remnants of the old bourgeoisie, broken down cars, idealistic internationalists known as the "Sandalistas", the comandantes flashing by in their modern jeeps, large-scale "encuentros" (meetings in the field) between Sandinista soldiers and Contras during the Sapoa peace process in 1988.

Where real life leaves off, cinema has taken over: twice I've found myself transformed as an "extra" on movie sets into a U.S. Marine - for "LATINO" in 1984 - and last year sloshing through mud in 1920's-style garb for "SANDINO" (still to be released).

Most recently, Nicaragua has been the frenetic election campaign, international observers, the stunning voting results and now a new page being turned in the country's tortured political history. At the moment the ideological and political clash has only taken a new turn, as these words have entered the daily lexicon: "reconciliation", "paz", "concertacion" (Loosely co-existence among groups whose interests are fundamentally divergent).

My entire 12-year involvement has become a

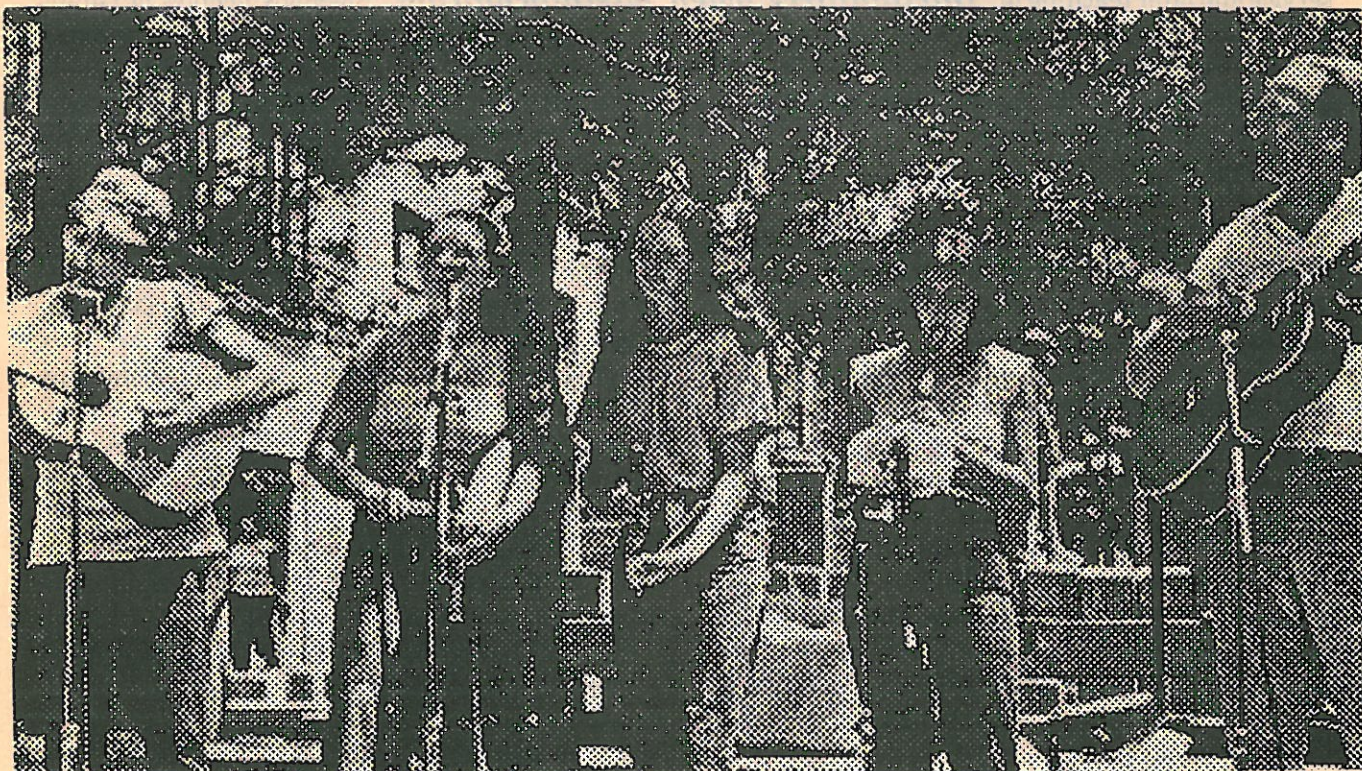
profound education in politics, economics, but above all human values. For at the heart of the whole drama one finds a people who only want to try and control their own destiny, a right almost universally denied everywhere in the world. This is why I believe such a proportionately small nation of only 3.5 million people has captured the world's attention for so long.

Nicaragua has in fact become so much a part of me, that as I think about CUSLAR and how my contact with Central America first began it seems an eternity ago, in both time and psyche.

All of which made receiving the letter about this reunion plan all the more important. Talking to Mary Jo Dudley here last week and hearing of old CUSLAR colleagues who she's made contact with inspired me to finally find time to finish this letter. If the event does come off as scheduled, it will be a kind of "roots" trip, back to where it all began, to meet friends I haven't seen in 10 years but whom I vividly remember. For as I said at the outset, entering into CUSLAR's world proved to be a step into a life I will never leave.

-Bill Gasperini

Managua, Nicaragua May 20, 1990



The famous "Conjunto Wonder" plays on the Ithaca Commons, 1983

ON SIX JESUITS, A MASSACRE AND THE WOMEN OF EL SALVADOR

I speak to you in solidarity with my Jesuit brothers who died in El Salvador and with their household servants, Julia Elba Ramos and her daughter, Celina. They were not only my Jesuit brothers, they were my close personal friends. They were men dedicated to the cause of peace and justice, working day and night relentlessly, to bring about a negotiated settlement. For that they are called subversive, Marxists, dupes of the Communists.

In the first place, who were these men? Five of them were from Spain; one, Father Lopez y Lopez, was a native of El Salvador. However, all five from Spain had become naturalized Salvadoran citizens. They did this to identify themselves as completely as they could with the people of El Salvador. They were not "foreigners", they were "fellow citizens" of the people to whom they ministered.

They were University men, doing what University men do best, trying to shed the light of truth and reason and knowledge on a tragic situation to bring it to an end. For that, they were killed, and symbolically, they were shot through the head, and their brains were scattered to show disregard for knowledge, disdain for the preeminence of reason in human affairs. The ones responsible for their deaths, deliberately and with malice afore thought, destroyed the truth, persecuted knowledge, and discarded

the use of reason in human affairs. Thus my colleagues in the Universities of the world must continue to cry out. This was not an assault on six Jesuit priests; this was an assault on, and a rejection of, every university and academic ideal for which we stand and for which we daily toil. But we live in hope; in the hope that truth, as always, will prevail; that knowledge will eventually be decisive; that reason will bring decency to human life. As the Jesuit Superior said in the funeral sermon: "They have not killed the Society of Jesus; they have not killed the University."

The most important, and the most brilliant, was Father Ignacio Ellacuria, Rector of the University

(what we could call the President). He was without a doubt one of the most influential intellectual leaders of El Salvador. When he spoke, El Salvador listened. The Jesuits at the University established a learned periodical, Central American Studies (Estudios Centro Americanos) to which Ellacuria was a frequent contributor. Two themes were emphatically presented in ECA:

(1) the state of inhuman injustice in El Salvador; the oppression of the peasants; the violent suppression of any effort to secure their human rights; the need for basic reforms of the economic and political institutions that would correct the injustice and oppression. Father Ellacuria described this as a state of "institutional violence," namely, institutions were so structured and functioned in such a way that the poor had no possibility of securing their human rights.

(2) An orientation in theology which is called "Liberation Theology." Liberation theology is too complex to be explained in a brief talk like the present. It insists that the meaning of the Gospels

They were University men, doing what University men do best, trying to shed the light of truth and reason and knowledge on a tragic situation to bring it to an end.

must be perceived in the total social, economic and political reality in which people live. When Jesus taught, "I am my brother's keeper," what does that mean in the total social

reality of El Salvador? The teaching that the gap between wealthy and poor did violence to the poor in El Salvador was not a Marxist ideology; it emerged out of a reflection on the Gospels in the context of the social reality of El Salvador. But anything that threatened the interests and power of the wealthy was called "communism;" it had to be destroyed to preserve what the wealthy and powerful were calling Western Christianity. And destroy it they have attempted to do. Ellacuria was the most powerful voice for justice and social reform. Like the great Archbishop Romero, he had to go.

Father Segundo Montes was a well trained sociologist who conducted and published some of the

most important studies of social conditions in El Salvador. Father Moreno and Father Martin-Baró were younger men, in their late forties. Moreno was a theologian and librarian of the University; Martin-Baró was the Academic Vice President, responsible for the entire academic program and faculty affairs of the University. Martin-Baró was also a sociologist, trained at the University of Chicago. He was bright, articulate and emphatic. He was the last to be heard from. When the shots were heard, the woman who was watching from a nearby house heard Martin-Baró shout: "This is injustice; this is a massacre." They were his last words, symbolic of his outspoken fearlessness.

Father Lopez y Lopez was the oldest, director of an international foundation, Fe Y Alegria (Faith And Joy) which provides funds to support elementary schools in poor areas, a man who loved his work with and for the poor. In the eyes of the killers, that was worthy of death.

When I was in San Salvador last year, these Jesuits had just conducted a nationwide public opinion poll for the Bishops. They asked the people of all classes and occupations: What were the three most

important needs of El Salvador. Unanimous with no dissenting opinions, came the cry: 1) a cease fire; 2) a negotiated peace; 3) the end of US military aid to the Army. The Jesuits then organized a national coalition, the likes of which had never existed before, of all the religious groups, the associations of teachers, of doctors and nurses; the leaders of the cooperatives; business associations, trade unions, organizations of most of the political orientations, to carry out the recommendations. Only the extreme "right" refused to collaborate.

The coalition seemed to enjoy some success for a while and there was a brief moment of hope for peace. This was what the Jesuit priests were doing. Even President Cristiani, a member of the right-wing Arena Party, called upon Father Ellacuria to assist him in seeking a negotiated peace.

It is important to remember that these killings were not a casual or isolated event. There has been a calculated escalation of violence in El Salvador for many years. In 1932 when the exploited peasants first revolted under the leadership of a son of a

wealthy family, Farabundo Martí, the rebellion was brutally crushed in a massacre that killed thousands of peasants in a few days; estimates run from 10,000-30,000. No one will ever know.

In 1977, on March 13th, Father Rutilio Grande was assassinated, as we saw in the film "Romero". Why? Because he was an advocate for the rights of peasants. Two months later, on May 11th, the killers assassinated Father Alfonso Navarro, a parish priest in San Salvador, with one of his altar boys. In May, 1977, the Jesuits were told to get out of the country by July 21st or they would all be killed. This provoked a widespread international response, including a forceful intervention of our State Department. The Jesuits refused to leave; they were not all killed.

On January 29, 1979, an army personnel carrier smashed through the iron gate of a training center, where parish leaders were trained, killed the Director, Father Octavio Ortiz and four of this staff. The killers dragged the bodies of the young men to the roof, put pistols into their dead hands, to give the impression that they had assaulted the army. But too many people had seen the massacre.

The killers have this naive way about them. When they killed the six Jesuits last November, they put a cardboard sign on the door that enters the University Campus: "We have just carried out an execution of informers, signed, Fuerza Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN)", as if anyone would believe that after they saw the evidence.

Then on March 24th, 1980, the great Archbishop Romero was shot to death while he was saying Mass at a hospital chapel. In November of that year, the political leaders of the insurrection were meeting at the Jesuit High School. The army came in, held the Jesuits at gun-point, and apprehended the six leaders of the Democratic Revolu-

tionary Front. They were found the next morning, tortured and dead. One of them, Enrique Alvarez, had lectured at Fordham the previous May, a remarkable man of a very wealthy family, but dedicated to the cause of Justice. On December 2, 1980, the four American women were raped and murdered. Only a few common soldiers have ever been punished for any of these crimes.

Therefore the death of the six Jesuits was simply the last event in a long history of assassinations. Most serious of all, are the thousands of innocent and poor people who have been killed.

And who were the women? — a humble and gentle little lady whose claim to fame was the won-

derful orange juice she served for breakfast or the rice and beans she cooked for dinner. She and her daughter are the symbols of the poor, the helpless, the oppressed. Thousands and thousands like her have died, with only a helpless cry on their lips, for peace and justice. Many of them never made statements that were headline news like the words of Father Ellacuria; they could not read the books in Father Moreno's library or understand the learned lectures of Father Amando Lopez; they never published scholarly research like Father Montes or Father Martin-Baró; their children attended the humble schools in the poor areas that were supported

by the foundation, Fe Y Alegria of Father Lopez y Lopez. They saw their husbands "disappeared," their sons killed; their daughters and sisters violated.

They are "Las mujeres aguantadoras," the enduring women, who endure with unshakeable faith and indomitable hope; "We are the Christ suffering today," they say, "but tomorrow will come the Resurrection."

Six Jesuits are assassinated and the entire world reacts in outrage; but thousands upon thousands of the humble and gentle people have died. Few people know their names, or remember the day they died. Let us not forget them and pray that their deaths, like the seed falling into the ground and dying, may bring forth abundant fruits of peace and justice.

Finally, as has been said so often, we cannot escape our own responsibility for this tragedy. All

these eight, and many of the poor, have been killed by American weapons and bullets; all the planes and tanks and military equipment have come from the United States; and to whatever extent the Army was involved, they are soldiers trained by American advisors. We can stop this tragedy if the United States withholds military aid. For ten years we have been sending hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid. And what is the result? The Archbishop assassinated; priests and nuns and religious workers murdered; and 70,000 Salvadoreans dead; and the situation grows worse now than it was ten years ago. When will we honestly admit a hopeless and tragic failure?

Six Jesuits are assassinated and the entire world reacts in outrage; but thousands upon thousands of the humble and gentle people have died.

As the president of my University said last month at the memorial Mass: "Can we supply the weapons to the killers and not be guilty of the blood that is on their hands?"

Let the memory of the dead, then, be the inspiration for all of us living; and let us dedicate ourselves, as the Jesuit priests did, to a relentless effort for peace with justice in El Salvador.

- Joseph Fitzpatrick, SJ
Fordham University

On April 1, 1990, Fr. Fitzpatrick spoke at a Service of Remembrance for the People of El Salvador, sponsored by the Ithaca Area Religious Task Force on central America. CUSLAR provided the Task Force with background information on the situation in El Salvador.

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 25th Anniversary and Reunion

Schedule of events:

Friday, Aug. 3

3pm-5pm Reception in the One World Room and in the Office

5pm-9pm Picnic at Stewart Park, Small Pavilion

9pm-?? Coffee or whatever at Ann Peters' house, 119 First St.

Saturday, Aug. 4

10am-11:30 Brunch in the One World Room, Anabel Taylor Hall

11:30-1pm Introductions and reflections on CUSLAR. *childcare nearby

1:30-3pm The current situation in Latin America and the U.S. role.

3:30-5pm Solidarity Work in the United States: Where Do We Draw Strength and How Do We Assess Where We Should Go?

5pm-9pm Picnic in Taughannock Park North (rain location 610 N.

Cayuga St.)

9pm-?? Dance Party at Ellen Alexander and Alex Hilchuck's house, 610

N. Cayuga St.

Sunday, Aug. 5

11am-2pm Brunch

2-6pm Open to your suggestions

6pm Reception and presentation by Rubén Garcia of the Annunciation House refugee shelter, El Paso, at the Firesides' house, 202 Eastwood Ave, sponsored with the Border Fund.

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