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Guest Editorial:
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The struggle of workers in the Ithaca area is rooted in the same goals that workers all over the world share. Put simply, while we create the wealth of our society, we do not enjoy anything approximating a fair share of that wealth, and neither do we truly govern ourselves.

Workers' struggles to achieve true democracy and economic equity in countries like Chile, Guatemala, or El Salvador are much more brutally repressed than anything in this country. However, during the "Reagan Era" workers' rights in our country have been significantly diminished. Specifically, Reagan has gutted the few liberal regulatory agencies that provided minimal protections to workers. OSHA, the agency formed to ensure some modicum of workplace safety has become virtually worthless to labor, and workplace deaths, injuries, and various toxic poisonings have risen. The NLRB, the agency mandated to protect worker's right to organize-free from undue harassment or delay has become a tool of the union-busters.

These changes have had tangible effects even here in Ithaca. Two ostensibly liberal local institutions, Ithacare and the Ithaca Times, have taken advantage of the weakened law enforcement in their responses to their own staffs' efforts to organize with the UAW. Our estimates are that Ithacare spent almost $1,000 for every "no" vote they coerced out of their workforce. Union-busting law firms like Bond, Schoeneck and King out of Syracuse are only too glad to soak companies like Ithacare. Thanks to this partnership between the union-busting consultant, the nervous, anti-union company, and the acquiescent NLRB, minimum wage workers like those caring for the elderly at Ithacare lose out.

Reagan's years in office have undermined workers' rights all over the world in ways the CUSLAR Newsletter has documented well. By appealing to racism, sexism, and selfishness, Reagan has not only unleashed the most reactionary elements in our society, he has exacerbated divisions within the working class. Only the genuine suffering that Reagan's policies have caused--the increased poverty, underemployment, and homelessness--has created coalitions and the beginnings of a new solidarity that have overcome the rightward trends.

Locally we see the coming together of progressive elements around issues like the poverty fight at Cornell, the United Farmworkers grape boycott, and even highly specific issues such as the City of Ithaca's funding of a "labor position." Groups working together in these struggles include not only an increasingly broad coalition of labor unions, but environmental groups, day care activists, peace activists, and gay and lesbian activists.

Such local coalitions have always included organizational stalwarts like CUSLAR, and in turn organized labor has developed an increasingly progressive position nationally, and an increasingly active role locally, on issues such as opposition to any aid to the contras, and general support of non-military solutions to Latin American conflicts.

With continued creativity and hard work, organizations like the UAW and CUSLAR can advance beyond these defensive Reagan years to a period of greater equity and justice for working people here and around the world. ✪
AIFLD in Latin America:
With Friends Like These....

What do Joseph Coors, Orrin Hatch, Ronald Reagan and organized labor have in common? Are unemployment in the U.S. and government repression in poor countries related? Why is the AFL-CIO involved in union-busting in Latin America? Are multinational corporations' interests and workers' rights the same? The answers to these questions point to the role of labor's U.S. leadership in supporting dictatorships and the economic privileges of elites in poor nations. The answers help explain the decline of labor's security and influence in the U.S. and around the world. The answers also point to new directions for promoting solidarity between all persons concerned with economic justice and human rights.

The chief agent of AFL-CIO foreign policy in Latin America is the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD--pronounced "A-field"). AIFLD was established in 1962 by the AFL-CIO, business interests and the US government as a response to the Cuban revolution. AIFLD's goals are to prevent further revolutions by promoting social services, reforms and centrist unions supportive of free trade, thereby denying revolutionary movements an essential base of support. AIFLD can claim modest success in improving the lives of small numbers of workers. Overall, however, it has acted with the U.S. government, the C.I.A., multinational corporations and repressive Latin American elites to break active and popular unions and destabilize and overthrow democratically-elected and pro-labor governments.

Leaving the intentions of AIFLD's leadership aside, it is clear that the agency's policies do not constructively address Latin American workers' most pressing concerns: poverty, hunger, disease, and elite rule enforced by repressive militaries. Instead, AIFLD attempts to establish unions that cooperate with management. The expectation is that an "attractive business climate" will promote foreign investment and economic development, benefitting workers in the long run. Just as in the U.S., this "trickle-down" theory works poorly in practice. The rich and poor grow farther apart based on elite control of productive resources such as agricultural land (in El Salvador, 2% of the population controls nearly all fertile land; 78% of the rural peasant population in Honduras own just 12% of the land). AIFLD discourages

The cover art is by Bruce Armstrong, a CUSLAR member and painter. The drawing was inspired by paintings by David Siquiernos and Alfredo Zalce, two Mexican artists whose work represents nearly a century of solidarity with the labor movement in Mexico. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, mothers of Argentina's 30,000 disappeared people, also provided inspiration. Labor organizers are second only to students among the ranks of the "desaparecidos" in Argentina.
political action by labor and actively attempts to break militant unions. Yet considering the extensive poverty and military repression Latin American workers face, political efforts and alliances with pro-labor parties are necessary to press for any degree of positive reform. This article provides an overview of AIFLD’s theory and practice, primarily in Central America.

They Call it Democracy

AIFLD’s funding and projects are guarded secrets. Although AIFLD is considered a private organization, allowing it to avoid standard Congressional oversight, most of the agency’s multimillion dollar budget comes from the US government through various channels, primarily the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Adversaries of unions in the US enthusiastically support AIFLD. J. Peter Grace of the W.R. Grace Company helped found the agency and served as chair until 1980. Grace has fought unions in his factories and headed the recent “Grace Commission” that blamed much government waste on federal employees and their unions. Ultraconservative Senator Orrin Hatch helped initiate the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) which provides funds for AIFLD. NED is part of the Reagan administration’s “Project Democracy” initiative which has been implicated in the Iran-contra scandal. Several AFL-CIO leaders sit on a variety of interlocking boards of directors of organizations which support intervention in Latin America, including the CIA-controlled contras waging war against Nicaragua. Joseph Coors has donated over one million dollars to efforts assisting the contras.

There is considerable evidence that the AFL-CIO’s international operations (such as AIFLD) are closely tied to the CIA. Wall Street Journal reporter Jonathan Kwitney interviewed ex-CIA agents and operatives who described CIA world-wide actions carried out under AFL-CIO cover, including bribes and destabilization activities. Ex-CIA agent Philip Agee has stated that AIFLD’s director William Doherty, Jr. has been a CIA agent, and that AIFLD is a “CIA-controlled labor center financed through AID.” An internal CIA analysis of Agee’s expose, Inside the Company, concluded that the details were “complete” and “accurate.”

The AFL-CIO’s involvement in Latin America has been controversial. The AFL, and the CIO after World War II, have consistently supported US interventions in Latin American affairs(1). The AFL-CIO actively supported the 1954 overthrow of the popular and reform-minded elected government of Arbenz in Guatemala. Since then, the Guatemalan military has virtually decimated the country’s labor movement. Thousands of unionists have been threatened, imprisoned, tortured, kidnapped (“disappeared”), or killed. In Brazil, Doherty bragged that AIFLD trainees were “intimately involved in some of the clandestine operations” leading to the overthrow of João Goulart(2). Military

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'Just Say Noriega':
Rationales for Washington's War on Panama

Panamanian military leader Manuel Antonio Noriega is tenuously resisting the recent escalation of the United States' two year-old campaign to curb him. The United States filed two indictments against Noriega on counts of drug trafficking and money laundering and slapped down the "most far-reaching sanctions ever voted against a supposedly friendly country." (Washington Post Dec. 16, 1987)

Responding to the pressure of the high-profile congressional, economic and media campaigns against Noriega, Panama's figurehead civilian president, Eric Delvalle, ordered Noriega's resignation, but was himself replaced after he went into hiding. Delvalle then called for a nationwide strike in protest which proved unpopular and ineffective and was cancelled on the third day.

General Noriega's popularity in Panama has surged with this opportunity to portray himself as the defender of Panamanian sovereignty against United States aggression. But navigating Panama's U.S.-imposed financial straits will require much more than populism. If Noriega cannot find a way to pay Panama's public employees, their protests may well pave the way for a U.S. approved 'democracy'.

Noriega views the attacks against him as an attempt by the U.S. government to undermine the treaties to turn the Panama canal over to full Panamanian control in the year 2000. He denies involvement in drug trafficking calling the drug indictments "strictly a political act" geared toward silencing critics of U.S. policy. Noriega has called for the United States to end its "psychological warfare against Panama." (New York Times, Feb. 6 & 8, 1988).

While none can defend Noriega's sordid political record, --which includes closing opposition newspapers, throwing critics in jail, allegedly tampering with election results, perhaps ordering the murder of a political opponent, and possibly being, as Senator Jesse Helms considers him, the "head of the biggest drug trafficking operation in the western hemisphere"--Noriega's most serious crime seems to be that he is an undependable ally in Washington's Central American foreign policy.

With his participation in the Contadora process, Noriega has consistently sought negotiated, non-military settlements to Central American problems. This put him at odds with the Reagan administration's goal of uniting the Central American nations in a bloc against Nicaragua. Moreover, Noriega refused to allow the contras to train in Panama and reportedly refused a U.S. request to invade Nicaragua in 1986. (see The Guardian Feb. 17, 1988).

Noriega's friction with Washington dates at least to August of 1985 when he intervened to ease tensions between Costa Rica and Nicaragua following violent border disputes. In a briefing paper leaked to the press shortly afterwards, Elliot Abrams, assistant secretary of state, insisted to the Central American ambassadors that the U.S. needed "to develop an active diplomacy now to head off efforts at Latin American solidarity aimed against the U.S. and our allies whether they are sponsored by the [Contadora] support group, the Cubans or the Nicaraguans."

Perhaps this "active diplomacy" went into effect in December of that year when National Security Advisor John Poindexter secretly met with Noriega in Panama to demand that he either withdraw from the Contadora group and support the contras or
resign. Noriega claims that during that visit, Poindexter conveyed the request to invade Nicaragua on a pretext and then call for U.S. assistance to carry out a joint military operation similar to the 1983 invasion of Grenada. "Their interest," Noriega said, "was for us to help the contras and we said no."

Poindexter returned to Washington determined to remove Noriega. Two months after his visit, the National Security Council transferred $40 million in economic aid from Panama to Guatemala, and Elliot Abrams, in collaboration with NSC staffers, including Lt. Col. Oliver North, and later Sen. Jesse Helms, called for an investigation into Noriega's human rights record and began the anti-Noriega campaign in Congress.

Claiming that the "ultimate solution" to the problems in Panama was removing Noriega from power, the Reagan administration suspended all aid to Panama last December, eliminated its sugar quota for export to the United States and imposed mandatory U.S. votes against loans to Panama from the International Development banks.

Washington's real motives behind the destabilization campaign are ambiguous. At stake in Panama are the canal (which many conservatives want to keep under U.S. control past 1999) and the Southern Command. The Command, which coordinates all United States military operations in Latin America, consists of eight military facilities and several top secret intelligence installations with 10,000 American troops. Clearly, the United States wants a stable, friendly government in power in Panama that will allow the bases to remain. Noriega's insistence that the bases must go and his close ties with Cuba have done nothing to endear him to conservatives. Nor could they be comfortable about his recent approval of Aeroflot service to Moscow or reportedly seeking a $200 million emergency loan from Libya.

As for other political motives, some believe that the Reagan administration is seeking to attract liberal support for the contras by focussing attention on the unpopular Noriega and pursuing democracy as eagerly in Panama as they purport to in Nicaragua. (Washington Post, Oct. 11, 1987)

Although the CIA and the Pentagon both have expressed reservations about removing Noriega, -they fear a worse man could take his place-- Elliot Abrams maintains that "Panama should not be run by a general. It should be run by an elected civilian government. ...The [U.S.] policy is to promote democracy." Curiously Abrams is not so vigorously 'promoting democracy' in Chile or Paraguay. (Washington Post, Oct. 11, 1987).

Despite the administration's motivations, their plan has partially backfired. The same congressional testimony used to expose Noriega's drug involvement shed light on the key role the CIA and other U.S. government agencies played in facilitating and participating in the drug trade and spying on members of the U.S. Congress. It also unwittingly implicated the government of Honduras.

"Next time cut out the guff about economic harmony. Just tell 'em we own the joint!"
It is strange that the media have downplayed and ignored testimony from some of Noriega’s closest associates that revealed that the General worked with Lt. Col. North on several projects, including an attempt in 1986 to frame the Sandinistas with a phony arms shipment to Salvadoran rebels. Noriega further served the Reagan administration by allowing Panama to be used as a resupply base for the contras and by authorizing Gen. Richard Secord to set up Panama based front companies.

Moreover, the testimony highlighted Noriega’s close relationship with the CIA dating back to the 1970’s. The CIA paid him as much as $200,000 a year and it may have been instrumental in bringing him to power in the first place. The CIA also repaid several Noriega favors by passing him personal information about his enemies in Congress -- principally Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and Jesse Helms (R-SC) and their staffs. (See In These Times, Feb. 24, 1988.)

Perhaps the Reagan administration will learn from this experience that ‘good’ U.S. intervention remains no intervention. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, a professor and senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, states the case succinctly:

“We Latins believe that altruistic causes such as ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ and even economic assistance are often mere pretexts to hide illegitimate purposes. At best, many Latin Americans believe that intervention -- even in good causes -- involves such abuses of power and violations of sovereign rights that it soon becomes an aggression.” (Washington Post, Aug. 5, 1987).

-Bruce Armstrong

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We Came to Fight!
El Salvador: US Labor Leader’s Eyewitness Report

In November 1987, David Dyson of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union(1) took part in a delegation accompanying Ruben Zamora and Guillermo Ungo to El Salvador. Zamora and Ungo are leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), a broad-based political coalition allied with the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) revolutionary army in the civil war against the repressive Salvadoran government. Zamora and Ungo were active in mainstream Salvadoran politics before the formation of the FDR in 1980. A professor at the Catholic University, Zamora was imprisoned and tortured in 1977 (and fired from his teaching post for not showing up for class). Both Zamora and Ungo participated in reform governments but resigned when it became clear that the Salvadoran military and political elites would not loosen their stranglehold on the country. Ungo explained to New York Times reporter Ray Bonner that "(d)uring a decade I stubbornly participated in elections in a country where democracy was considered subversive. I doubt that many American democrats would have the endurance to do so when elections meant jail, persecution, fear, and fraud, when every one said you were a fool to participate."(2) After the 1987 visit, the two leaders left El Salvador to continue their work in exile. Dave Dyson wrote that the "return of Ruben Zamora and Guillermo Ungo created incredible energy and hope in a situation cynics describe as hopeless." CUSLAR is pleased to publish excerpts from Dyson’s day-to-day journal account.

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The plane touches down in Mexico City about 3:30 a.m. We are a small group of North Americans en route to accompany
opposition leader Ruben Zamorato back to El Salvador after eight years in exile. The government of El Salvador is not so much allowing Ruben back in, he’s just going. The political and physical risks are enormous.

Our delegation, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, includes a human rights expert, an executive of the National Council of Churches, a priest from the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and two congressional aides. Dr. Guillermo Ungo, the President of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) of El Salvador will come back into the country two days later with a largely European delegation.

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We are joined by Hector Dada, the former foreign minister of El Salvador, now an exile working with the U.N. He reminds us of the reality one never becomes comfortable with. Of the 60,000 people who have died in the Salvadoran revolution, only 12,000 have been killed as a direct result of the war. The other 50,000 were the work of the “security” forces, taken from beds in the middle of the night, grabbed on street corners in broad daylight, led off with thumbs tied behind their back never to be seen again. Over half of those 50,000... were never found. The Reagan administration boasts of the fact that the killing has been reduced to a dull roar, more like 30 instead of 800 a month. Imagine any other country where thirty people are killed per month - every month. The point is, as Hector Dada explains, it is no longer necessary to kill quite so many to maintain the level of terror. A well-placed killing, such as the murder of Herbert Anaya of the Human Rights Commission, makes the point very clear.

Just a couple of weeks before our trip, two farmworkers were found murdered on the Santa Ana highway in the Salvadoran
countryside. We still don't know who they were, or what they did, or didn't do. But we
do know - in part - why they were killed.
Written across the chests of the dead men in
red magic marker were the letters "FDR."
Two bodies, dead on the road. One for
Zamora. One for Ungo.

El Salvador is 50 times smaller than the
U.S. If we suffered the same rate of killing,
proportionate to our population, it would be
the equivalent of a Viet Nam War every
month.

We are joined at the table by Ruben
Zamora. He seems unusually relaxed. He
tells us he is experiencing "the calm before
the storm."

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As the plane lands, the cabin becomes a
flight attendant's nightmare as journalists
begin to jockey for position. Those of us on
the delegation are mercifully allowed up
front where we are supposed to be. As we
wait for the door to open, I re-live the
adolescent experience of standing in the
stadium tunnel waiting to run onto the field
for Saturday's big football game. This is no
game, however, and I try to look as calm as
possible. I hope I will do the right thing if
something happens.

The door swings open and Ruben Zamora
steps out. I step out behind him. We are
immediately hit in the face with the glare of
TV lights. Video crews and reporters are
everywhere as we try to make it down the
ramp. Zamora tells me later that he guessed
a full half of the "journalists" at the airport
were, in fact, government agents, a fact I'm
glad I didn't know at the time. Ruben cozies
up to a reporter whom he recognizes as
legitimate and begins interviewing away. I
walk beside him, remembering my United
Farm Worker security days, watching
people's hands and open doorways.

When we reach the customs area, the line
is predictably long. As our group positions
itself at the end of one long line, a well-
dressed woman approaches Zamora. She is
an airport official and politely welcomes
"Dr. Zamora" and asks him if he wants to
go with her to the VIP area to clear customs.

With the news cameras whirling, Ruben
just as politely declines her offer and says
that he will stay in line with his party.

At the customs desk the men smile and let
us pass untouched. The ever present
National Police, armed to the teeth with their
G-3 assault rifles, are around but at a
reasonable distance. Someone has told them
to back off.

Once through customs we can hear the
din outside for the first time. Ruben barely
steps through the door to the outside world
when he is literally seized by a throng of
supporters. When he comes into full view a
deafening roar goes up from hundreds of
people. There is no staying close to him
now. He belongs to them.

Zamora is half-carried, half-pushed
from one side of the crowd to the next before
being deposited on the back of a blue pick-up
truck. There, a mike is thrust into his hand
and Ruben goes to town. Over the years I
had observed him mostly in interviews and
giving lectures. One forgets what a
dynamic politician he really is. Although
my Spanish is terrible, I can feel almost
everything Zamora says without having to
understand every word. The crowd goes
crazy at every major point he makes. "¡El
pueblo unido jamás será vencido!"(3)

Somehow that chant never sounds so good in
English. A couple of weeks before our trip,
Duarte had been in the White House rose
garden and had nauseated everyone in El
Salvador by stopping and actually kissing
the U.S. flag. As Zamora reaches the end of
his emotional speech, a campesino woman
moves up behind Ruben with a large blue
and white Salvadoran national flag. As he
nears his crescendo, he reaches back and
grabs the flag in his up raised fist. "This,"

he screams, "is the only flag I kiss!" He
buries his face in the cloth and you could
Monday

We have breakfast early with a U.S. church worker who has been living in the countryside. Things are bad there again. The Arias peace plan has the army worried. After all, they're not in the business of peace. It's been over a year since I've been in Salvador and I can feel the tension in the city. "After killing 60,000 people, you don't have to kill so many any more," the church worker tells us. "Just pick out someone carefully and kill them. After 60,000, the message is clear."

While we eat, Zamora is meeting with Dr. Reni Roldan, the Secretary-General of the Salvadoran Social Democratic Party. Unlike the two FDR leaders, Roldan has stayed inside the country at considerable risk to himself and his followers. Roldan has now allied his PSD party with Ungo's National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) and Zamora's Popular Social Christian Movement to form what they call the "Democratic Convergence." It is a small, shaky step toward getting back into the political process of the nation.

Zamora and Roldan's meeting breaks up about 7:30 a.m. Roldan heads home in a car with a couple of his aides. About two blocks from his house, neighbors run out into the street and flag down the car. Four heavily armed men have entered Roldan's home and are waiting there to kill him. Roldan's car turns around and heads back to the hotel. The gunmen wait and then decide that Roldan has been tipped off. They leave, fortunately, without killing the inhabitants of the house. They will have their day again.

When news of the attempted assassination hits our party, the mood becomes somber. The analysis is that Roldan was to be punished for joining up with Zamora and Ungo. It would be easier to get to Roldan, the press release would not be as great as striking directly at the FDR men, and the message would be crystal clear.

Guillermo Ungo is due in at the airport soon and now there is real concern over security. A rally is planned for his triumphal entry but it occurs to us that it will be dark by the time the rally starts.

The scene at the airport is much the same as it was for Zamora's entry. While we wait, an American-built "Huey" helicopter, bristling with M-60 machine guns, swoops down to take a look at the crowd. Ungo is accompanied by an entourage of Germans, Swedes, Canadians, a member of the British House of Lords, and Bianca Jagger. We tease Ungo later that he has the "three-piece suit" delegation while Zamora had the "guayabaras" (a Salvadoran shirt).

Once again we make the mad dash from the airport straight to the plaza in front of the cathedral. This is the same plaza, of course, where the police opened fire on Archbishop Romero's funeral crowd. I can still remember the news footage of people trying in vain to get some cover on the cathedral steps while the bullets bounce all around them and occasionally into them.

It is pitch black and the rally stage is lit up by the video cameras of the press. The plaza is decked out in balloons and banners and the atmosphere is electric. Our van drives right up to the edge of the stage and we are whisked onto the platform like the Rolling Stones, along with Zamora. Ungo follows with his group and there are hugs, kisses and chants galore.

Unexpectedly, we are introduced, one by one, to the crowd. None of us is comfortable with this as the rally is such a significant Salvadoran event, but we step forward as our names are read and wave to the crowd. Thousands of people are in the square. Revolution is truly in the air. I don't know when the last night rally in El Salvador
was, but many of the people have their faces covered. There is a moment of genuine silence for Herbert Anaya and other fallen martyrs and then the militaristic Salvadoran national anthem is played. Julio Portillo, the head of ANDES, the teachers' union, opens up the rally with a stirring talk. Marco Tulio Lima of the UNTS (National Unity of Salvadoran Workers) is there as well. Zamora and Ungo follow and are magnificent. "We came to fight," Ruben shouts, "It can't be otherwise." This is clearly the best-run event of the trip so far.

As I go to jump down from the stage I feel a hand reach up and grab my arm. It is Febe Elizabeth Valesquez, the president of the textile union at Levi Strauss, the head of the FENASTRAS labor federation, and an executive board member of the UNTS. I had heard about the famous Febe for years but hadn't actually met her until the April 25 mobilization, when she was in the U.S. The summer before last, she was picked up by the [Salvadoran] Treasury Police on the street in broad daylight. Before they shoved her in the car, she yelled, "I'm Febe from FENASTRAS!" It probably saved her life. Trade unionists in the U.S. mobilized quickly and sent hundreds of telegrams demanding her release. We had a full-page ad for a Salvadoran newspaper ready to go when Duarte himself went to the Treasury Police and escorted her out. I asked her what they did to her. She didn't like talking about it. I do know that they beat her bad enough that she had to be hospitalized for neck injuries after her release.

At the rally, I ask her why Julio Portillo got to speak and not her. "Machismo," she says with a big smile. She hops up on the stage--the only woman--and stands with Zamora and Ungo.

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Tuesday

Bill Ford has brought his daughter, Miriam, to El Salvador with him. She is his eldest child, a nurse who lives in New Haven and was the closest of Bill's children to Ita. Sister Ita Ford is buried in Chaltenango Province, where she had worked. As cabin fever is starting to set in on those of us sequestered in the hotel, we decide to travel with them to visit the grave.

...In about an hour we come to our first bridge controlled by the army. "Damn!" our driver yells as the jeep in front pulls over without even being challenged. Our Spanish-speakers jump out, waving our little white permiso, and there is extended discussion like umpires at a baseball game discussing a bad call. Finally they let us go but before long we come to a bigger bridge with bigger speed bumps and even more soldiers.

...We end up waiting for a considerable time....Leaning out over the bridge, the priest in our group tells me that he had gone to the cathedral early in the morning to spend some time at Archbishop Romero's tomb. Even that early, he said, there was a steady stream of visitors stopping to pray or just to look. The priest had not worn his collar and he started up some conversations with some of the people. One man told him he was praying for his seventeen-year-old son, who had been taken from his bed in the middle of the night. The family, which was poor, spent its entire life savings trying to find their son. They never did. Their other son had been "drafted" into the National Guard, and the experience had left him a "vegetable." "All he does," the father said, "is eat when he's hungry. That's all." "Every family who comes here," the man goes on, "has a story like ours."

...Bill Ford and his daughter Miriam cross the road and go down into the cemetery. Everyone knows to give them some time alone. After a while we find them in front of three rectangular concrete graves. On the center one is a cross with the word "MARYCNOLL" misspelled on it. "Every time I come, somebody tries to write
Maryknoll' on that cross," Bill Ford tells us, "and every time they misspell it a different way." Ita Ford's grave is on the right. In the center is Maura Clarke, another of the Maryknoll sisters raped and killed by the guardsmen. "We really don't know who's under which marker," Bill says. "After the last autopsy, they mixed up the identities. It doesn't matter." On the left is buried Karla Piette, also a Maryknoll sister. "Who is she?" I ask Bill. "She worked with Ita in Chaltenango. There was a flash flood and their car went into the river. Karla pushed Ita to safety and then drowned." I wasn't sure I was going to be able to take much more of this story. "Karla was the driver for the sisters. When she died, Ita couldn't drive because she had lost her peripheral vision in Chile. They brought in Maura Clarke to drive." They brought in Maura Clarke in time to die, I thought.

We had bought some fresh flowers in San Salvador, and Bill divides them carefully into three bunches and lays them on the three graves. The priest says a prayer. Three curious brown-eyed children come and stand with us. I'm sure they rarely see gringos in their cemetery. Bill Ford breaks the silence and says, "She set a high standard for the rest of us."

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The "Democratic Convergence" of Zamora's, Ungo's and Roldan's parties is having a cocktail reception at the Hotel Siesta tonight. We are all looking forward to hors d'œuvres and several stiff drinks.

...The reception provides some much-needed relief from the tension. The security is terrible but everyone seems too tired to care. Dr. Ungo comes over and asks me if I've been "having a good time," like we've been on a Club Med weekend. I see the twinkle in his eye and answer, "Yes, we'll have to do this again some time." Ungo introduces me to Reni Roldan. Someone walks up and asks Roldan what he's been doing this week. "Staying alive," he says with a broad smile.

I feel an ominous presence to my left. It is one of the senior assistants at the U.S. embassy moving in on our discussion. "Nice to see you back, Dr. Ungo," the embassy man says in his phoniest voice. "Why?" said Ungo, "You people don't really support all this peace business." "You should come back and join the process," the aide continues. Ungo smiles again and says, "I wouldn't last a month and you know it." "You need to renounce your ties to the guerrillas." The U.S. official is relentless in his pursuit of the party line. "You know," says Ungo, now right in the aide's face, "I was in the process in this country. When we were in the process, we were beaten, we were jailed, and we were killed. Now I'm with the guerrillas, and here I am talking to the U.S. embassy at a cocktail party."

I had just witnessed one of the great moments in diplomatic history.

Notes

1 Dyson is also a leader in the National Labor Committee in support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador.


3 "The people, united, will never be defeated!"

4 Archbishop Oscar Romero was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass.

5 A Washington, D.C. protest against U.S. foreign policy in Central America and Southern Africa that was attended by over 100,000 people.

6 Sister Ford and three others were murdered by Salvadoran National Guardsmen in 1981. The officers who ordered the killings have never been prosecuted.
The Strike was legitimate....The fact that it was judged illegal has no validity, for the worker made strikes legal from the moment that so many practiced their real human right. 1

"Lula," (Luis Inacio da Silva), commenting on the 1978 Sao Bernardo metalworkers strike

Breaking Away: Novo Syndicalismo, The PT, and Brazilian Political Culture

In April and May of 1980, an extraordinary strike of over 200,000 metalworkers occurred in Sao Bernardo, an industrial suburb of Sao Paulo. For months prior to the walk-out, the union had painstakingly conducted several hundred plant-level meetings to formulate demands and prepare workers for strike activity. 2 A "committee of 450" served as a co-ordinating body between union negotiators and the rank and file, both to ensure broad involvement and in anticipation of attempts by the government to break the strike through arrest and detention of its leaders. The demands of the workers not only included calls for improved wages and job security but explicitly challenged the state's traditional control of labor relations by ignoring legal procedures and refusing to buckle despite threats and police violence. 3 To the surprise of many observers, the workers held out for 41 days and attracted widespread support from church, student, and neighborhood organizations. As helicopters hovered overhead menacingly, several hundred thousand workers met in the local football stadium to plan strike strategy. After the government barred them from gathering there, the cardinal of Sao Paulo opened the grounds of the church cathedral to the strikers, defying the Brazilian president's charges that he was "inciting" the workers against the authority of the state. 4 Ultimately mass arrests of strike leaders and workers, along with limited strike funds and continuing employer/state intransigence, forced the walk-out to end with its major demands unmet. But the ability of the workers to resist fierce state intervention, mobilize enthusiastic assistance from outside organizations, and win the warm blessing of the Church hierarchy suggested a new force was at work in Brazilian society.

Despite the setback of the 1980 strike, "Novo Syndicalismo" (the New Syndicalism) signalled a forceful attempt to enlarge political space in a society where union activity and popular participation had previously inhabited severely circumscribed spheres. The formation of the PT (Workers Party) later that year further underscored the determination of the new syndicalists to break away from politics as usual and to promote a different conception of political practice in Brazil.

The advent of Novo Syndicalismo cannot be fully understood without consideration of the Church's contributions to its development. While the activities of the "progressive Church" in some ways paralleled the growth of the new syndicalism, there were also important points of intersection crucial to attempts to create a different kind of political discourse.

Circulos Operarios, church inspired "workers' circles" that originated in the 1920s, had begun to show increasing militancy by the 1950s, rebelling against conservative clerical direction and responding to criticism and competition from other labor organizations on the left. 5 Some of this criticism was inspired by the new movements for grass-roots education (MEB) and pastoral associations which became involved in conscientizacao (consciousness-raising) within the working class. Rejecting paternalistic approaches, the MEBs saw
ordinary people as potential “agents of change” capable of thinking, learning, and mobilizing without third party initiative or manipulation. 6

In considering the Church’s contributions to the new syndicalism, the important role of the ecclesial base communities (CEBs) cannot be overlooked. Founded in the 1960s as an extension of pastoral and lay work in neighborhoods and communities, the CEBs initially assumed the form of small groups of laity discussing issues of faith, fraternity, and solidarity. As the authoritarian regime curtailed and limited the available forums for political discussion, however, the CEBs became one of the few “free spaces” in Brazilian political culture where uninhibited thought and expression could occur. 7 Armed with a conscientizacao approach inspired by the MEBs and influenced by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire’s “dialogic” style of learning, the CEBs stressed the importance of communitarian ideals over clientilism and the need to resist structures which denied personal worth and undermined social solidarity. The rhetoric and practice of the new syndicalism closely parallels that of the CEBs, and it would appear that many CEB members participate fully in the autenticos unions and the PT (Workers Party).

By the mid-1970s many of the conditions responsible for the new syndicalism were in place: a concentration of workers in strategic new industries, a sharp decline in real wages, and links to progressive church and laity through pastoral associations and the CEBs. In the larger political arena, elite qualms about excessive state interference in the economy, coupled with the military’s own uneasiness over its encompassing role in governing led to the abertura, a relaxation of rigid controls on political activity. Soon thereafter, the autenticos (the word denoted militant unionists not tied to the old political ethos) capitalized on public disclosures that the official figures used to determine wage increases had been doctored and loudly demanded restitution. 8

The 1979 strike set in motion a series of walk-outs in other workplaces, many of them involving salaried, white-collar employees. In these instances, some limits to the new syndicalism could be discerned. Many of these unions were content to receive recognition of their status and were unprepared to advance a more radical political agenda such as that proposed by the metalworkers. 9 In other words, these groups of workers were more susceptible to the old patron-client system and perhaps less inclined to view a “reasonable” state as an implacable foe.

The 1980 strike was in many ways a culmination of the initial phase of Novo Syndicalismo. Its organizational sophistication enabled the workers to withstand harsh state opposition for a time and its close ties to the church and neighborhood associations were readily confirmed by the staunch backing of these allies. But this formidable coalition frightened the authorities and demonstrated there were definite limits to both the speed and degree to which the abertura would be allowed to proceed. While the new syndicalism had suffered a severe setback, it was by no means defeated as a force in Brazilian politics. Rather, while union activity retrenched and assumed other forms, the autenticos turned their attention directly to politics with the establishment of the PT (Workers Party) in 1980, an attempt to inject class-consciousness explicitly into the electoral arena.

Reflecting the perspective of many CEB activists, the autenticos were initially wary, even disdainful of politics, fearing their independence would be subverted by
participation in a corrupt process. But it soon became obvious that the new syndicalists could not maintain an apolitical stance for long. The very nature of the labor code, with all its provisions for state supervision and intervention in union affairs, had historically politicized Brazilian labor relations. Any serious attempt to break free of its constraints would invariably have to deal with the state.

Radically anti-statist in its approach, the PT criticized the other parties as elitist and unrepresentative while explicitly identifying itself as the voice of the working-class. In the months preceding its 1982 electoral debut, the PT’s view of who comprised the working-class fluctuated. At times, class was interpreted broadly in populist terms, including all who were exploited either economically or politically by a corrupt regime, regardless of class origin. On other occasions, PT’s imagery was more narrowly presented in traditional class terms, that is, the workers as proletarians resisting the state and its class allies.

PT garnered credible support in its stronghold of industrial workers near Sao Paulo, winning some state and federal legislative races, city council posts, and several mayors’ offices. But it was the more mainstream opposition party, the PMDB, that was able to convince the voters not to “waste their ballot” on the PT as an empty protest.

Caught in the difficult transition from protest movement to political party, the PT struggled to define its relationship to both the system and its own constituent groups. In areas where it won local offices, PT faced an old dilemma that has long vexed radicals after electoral triumphs: how to satisfy immediate demands without sacrificing broader goals or succumbing to the lure of clientelistic politics.

Much of Brazilian political culture and its apparatus remains intact; the unions still function under an outmoded labor code which permits the state to regulate most phases of their activity. The autenticos walk a political tightrope; they agitate and engage in direct action, then seek to negotiate, but always under the cloud of potentially provoking state intervention or outright repression. It is also clear that while the autenticos represent an important segment of the working class, theirs is a position not entirely shared by other wage earners whose demands are more easily satisfied by neo-populist forms of accommodation.

Reflecting a wariness toward traditional union subordination to political party dictates, the autenticos have been reluctant to grant the PT much autonomy beyond “cheerleading” for the demands of the new unions. But an additional problem is less tactical than institutional, namely the historic weakness of parliamentary politics in Brazil which leaves PT legislators an inadequate forum in which to operate.

Ultimately the largest obstacle faced by the autenticos and the PT may be the deeply entrenched significance of patron-client relationships in Brazilian culture. According to one analyst, “who you know versus who I know is the fundamental fact in the Brazilian social calculus.” Clearly the CEBs have done much to at least present other options to dependency and populism; these alternative ways of seeing the world have inspired the autenticos, the PT, and other social movements to challenge old norms and propose new directions. Lacking the power to implement or institutionalize their political program, the PT and the autenticos must function along the margins of Brazilian politics, making guerilla-like forays which occasionally jar the state and
assert potential power, but remaining unable to consolidate their gains in ways that would upset the foundations of elite and military control.

But these limitations should not be allowed to minimize or denigrate the achievements of the Novo Syndicalismo or the PT. While Riordan Roett is certainly right to note the essential continuity of Brazilian political culture despite challenges to its authority, much change has occurred in the years (post-1978) since he offered that pessimistic assessment. The labor code no longer possesses the same level of authority or credibility that it did ten years ago despite the retention of many of its prerogatives. Moreover, the PT and the new syndicalism have brought fresh perspectives to Brazilian politics and substantially enlarged the options available to citizens in the workplace, voting booth, and neighborhood. Of course, the abertura is a fragile process; the state remains strong and largely impervious to challenge, and the military cannot be discounted as an obstacle to further change. The transition from movement to political party and from local to national politics is tortuous and contains no guarantees or assurances of success. But there is an alternative vision that has begun to grow, that has demonstrated hardiness and staying power, and that appears aware of the need to adapt and sharpen its analysis to suit complex circumstances. This vision will not be easily co-opted or diverted and should continue to exert considerable influence on a political culture already engaged in the hard task of re-definition.

-Bob Bussel

Bob Bussel is a former union organizer and currently a graduate student in history at Cornell.

Notes

1"Lula," (Luís Inacio da Silva), quoted in Maria Helena Moreira Alves, State and Opposition in Military Brazil, 1984.
7Ibid, p. 179.
8Erickson and Middlebrook, op. cit., pp. 247-249.
9Tavares de Almeida, op. cit., p. 159.
13Moises, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
14Keck, op. cit., p. 21.
15Ibid., p. 4.
Continued from page 4

governments following the reformist Goulart tightly limited labor's activities in Brazil. AIFLD worked hand-in-glove with the military, for example, strongly supporting a wage freeze. A former AIFLD employee stated, "by the definition of AIFLD anyone who wanted a raise was a communist." The UAW's Victor Reuther, commented on AIFLD's support of the freeze: "not even the most servile company union in the U.S. would dare to advocate this kind of sellout...with this kind of friends, who needs enemies?"

The anti-labor activities of the AFL-CIO and AIFLD in Guatemala and Brazil are not isolated or unusual cases. AIFLD's (and the CIA's) efforts to foster labor unrest through AIFLD-funded unions helped in the overthrow of democratically elected governments in Guyana (1963) and the Dominican Republic (1963-65). AIFLD actively supported the violent overthrow of Chile's democratically elected government in 1973 (a coup engineered by the CIA and multinationals such as IT&T, Kennecott, and Anaconda Copper). The dictatorship ruling Chile murdered 20,000 workers after the coup and has created a fascist, military state.

AIFLD in El Salvador

The union movement in El Salvador provides a striking illustration of how AIFLD goes about its business. AIFLD has consistently worked with (if not always entirely approved of) the repressive military regimes and wealthy elites that have ruled El Salvador during the 1960s and 1970s. Unions funded and directed by AIFLD were allowed to publicly organize while independent labor groups were violently sent underground. Rebellion against the dictatorships continued to increase; the Sandinista victory of June 1979 in Nicaragua was certainly an inspiration. The largest protest in Salvadoran history—nearly 200,000 people in a country of under 5 million—occurred in January, 1980 (police killed 49 marchers). A huge coalition of labor, religious, peasant, student and other groups founded the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) in April 1980. AIFLD responded by establishing the Popular Democratic Unity (UPD) federation to dilute the strength of the militant FDR. The Salvadoran military para-military death squads cooperated by allowing the UPD to publicly organize while killing an estimated 5,000 unionists independent of AIFLD.

To further weaken support for the growing revolutionary movement and to promote capitalist development, AIFLD planned a reform program that would provide small parcels of land to impoverished rural peasants. The model for the reform program was a similar attempt to pacify landless peasants during the Vietnam war. As designed, the program offered tiny plots and ignored traditional Salvadoran agricultural practices. Loans and supplies were nearly impossible to receive. But the program's greatest obstacles were the ruling elites and the military who rejected even the very mild reforms of the AIFLD program. A state of siege was declared and death squad terror became greatest in those areas where peasants had received land. Two of the AIFLD organizers of the program, and the Salvadoran director were assassinated; all evidence implicates the military in the slayings (3).

Yet AIFLD stayed its course. As the 1984 Salvadoran presidential elections neared, AIFLD convinced the UPD to get out the vote for Jose Napoleon Duarte. Duarte was characterized as a moderate who could bring peace to the warring parties. UPD leaders were suspicious and demanded several promises from candidate Duarte. AIFLD injected massive resources into the process, and Duarte's eventual victory can be attributed to labor's broad support. UPD
leaders were brought before the US Congress to lobby for continued US aid.

Duarte's victory allowed the Reagan administration to claim real democracy existed in El Salvador, and by doing so pump more military aid into the country. President Duarte did not, however, live up to his promises to eliminate state violence, prosecute human rights abusers, and engage in serious peace negotiations with the revolutionary guerilla army, the FMLN (although negotiations were repeatedly offered by the guerrillas). The UPD believed they had been betrayed and publicly said so. AIFLD responded to the UPD's exercise of free unionism by cutting off its funding and (again) creating a parallel federation to bust the UPD. The unpopular new "phantom" AIFLD federation was declared the only democratic labor organization in the country.

Unions in Nicaragua

During the US-backed Somoza dictatorship, only 160 collective bargaining agreements were registered with the government from 1945 to 1979. The Confederation of Trade Union Unity (CUS), funded by AIFLD, was allowed to organise openly while the dictatorship's labor opponents were brutally repressed. After the Sandinista-led revolution in 1979, trade union membership grew from 27,000 in 1979 to 260,000 in 1984. Over 1,000 collective bargaining agreements were signed in the Sandinista government's first 5 years. The CUS—which continues to receive US funds—negotiated 1 collective bargaining agreement in 1983 out of 237 signed that year. The Sandinistas have supported equal pay for equal work (comparable worth), a 8-hour work day with overtime provisions, food price subsidies, low-cost education and medical care and employees participation in decision-making. An AIFLD report stating that the Sandinista government has destroyed free trade unions was called "grossly inaccurate and misleading" by a fact-finding delegation including members of the (US) National Lawyers Guild, employees of the National Labor Relations Board, and attorneys for some AFL-CIO unions. Many of the reports of Sandinista repression were, in fact, refuted by trade union opponents of the Nicaraguan government.

The anti-Sandinista union confederations (the CUS and the Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers (CNT) remain small and unpopular. They blame that fact on the Sandinistas and there is credible evidence of Sandinista harassment, including detentions of some unionists. The right-to-strike has been suspended by the government, although it has been once again granted in compliance with the Arias peace plan. Yet even AIFLD has conceded that not one labor opponent has been killed, maimed, or disappeared. This is in marked contrast to the situation in Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile and other countries where AIFLD does not attack the government. Although both the CUS and the CNT have opposed US support of the contras, the CUS in particular remains linked to the CIA-directed mercenaries in the public eye. This is because of the previous cozy relationship with the Somoza dictatorship, continued US funding, and membership in a pro-contra political coalition allied to conservative business leaders. The CIA/contra war has cost 10,000 lives (the contras typically attack peasants, not the Nicaraguan army) and has played a major role in ruining the Nicaraguan economy. Nicaraguans study history, and understand the role played by the CIA and AIFLD-backed unions in the overthrow of other popular governments. If the US was in a similar situation (consider World War II restrictions) how would patriotic unionists expect the government to respond? - R.G.
In June, 1985 Duarte approved a military attack to break a strike at San Salvador's General Hospital. Duarte announced severe economic measures in January, 1986 that deeply affected workers while bypassing the wealthy. As all trust in Duarte faded, workers (including AIFLD's creation, the UPD) formed the largest labor coalition in the country's history, the National Unity of Salvadoran Workers (UNTS) in 1986. The UNTS has 300,000 members, including the vehemently anti-communist Salvadoran Workers Central (CTS). AIFLD responded by (once again) attempting to form a dual confederation. AIFLD bribed the UPD leadership to leave UNTS. A secret memorandum from the US embassy in El Salvador to Secretary of State George Schultz bluntly stated that the UPD's president Mendoza was granted "initial assistance" of $3,000 (average yearly earnings in El Salvador are about $680). The memo goes on to say that AIFLD should continue "to pick off UNTS member unions one-by-one." AIFLD lavishes money on affiliated unions (often providing the great majority of the unions' budgets) while red-baiting independent unionists--what amounts in El Salvador to an invitation to the death squads.

Yesterday's Ideas--Today's Realities

It is a painfully ironic truth that the AFL-CIO has been willing to work with brutal anti-labor governments as long as these regimes advocate anti-communism and free trade. Both the AFL-CIO's concern with communism and its support of 'favorable business climates' have to be examined for their impact on workers in Latin America and here in the U.S. A look at the origins of the AFL-CIO's foreign policy is useful here.

Labor's contributions to the fight against fascism in World War II are well known. After the war, labor joined into a 'social accord' with business and government that promised economic gains and industrial peace(4). In return for the financial support needed to rebuild Europe, the Marshall Plan guaranteed few or no trade restrictions (such as tariffs or quotas), free movement of capital investments and profits, and no limits on the buying and selling of foreign currencies. This was an excellent arrangement for the U.S. which had emerged from the war as the strongest industrial power. These guidelines promised new markets for U.S. exports, cheap imports, access to foreign natural resources, and safety for U.S. corporations doing business in other countries. As business prospered mightily, it was expected that labor would also. In fact, the strong economy did initially provide for predictable gains in wages and benefits, as well as job security (Cantor & Schor, chapter 2).

It became difficult to oppose this set of arrangements during the late 1940s through the 1950s because the economic goals of the Marshall Plan were tightly linked to the fight against world communism. The Truman administration began a huge U.S. military build-up around the world to contain communism. Domestically, police departments' Red Squads, McCarthyism, and an honest fear by many of the Soviet Union characterized the period. Progressive activists were purged from their unions' ranks. In this cold war context, it became easy to equate free trade with "freedom". "Red-baiting" became the weapon of choice to harass and discredit independent voices (Cantor & Schor, chapter 2). Red-baiting remains a common political tactic today.

The world economy has changed greatly since World War II bringing into question many of the AFL-CIO's policies. Further, it is not necessary to support communism or Soviet-influenced unions to see the great danger of red-baiting and blind anti-
simply as a battle between the superpowers obscures the reality of poverty, hunger, and dramatic power inequities facing workers in Latin America and elsewhere in the third world. AIFLD’s brand of business unionism does not meet the basic needs of Latin American workers.

The situation of workers in Honduras illustrates the limited relevance of AIFLD’s approach. AIFLD has successfully promoted compromises between Honduran labor and management. The agency has also supported social projects, such as housing for banana workers belonging to an affiliated union. Honduras remains, however, the second poorest nation in the hemisphere, after Haiti. Infant mortality is the highest in Central America (78/1000) and life expectancy is about 60 years. There is one doctor for every 3,200 people and only 44% of the population has access to safe water. The 50 largest firms are 82% owned by US corporations. Encouraged by AIFLD, Honduran workers are philosophically divided into competing union federations, preventing the solidarity necessary to successfully fight for improved wages, security and working conditions. The nation is thoroughly dominated by its own military, the U.S. military, and the CIA-controlled contras waging war against Nicaragua from Honduran bases. Violent repression against unionists is becoming commonplace (while AIFLD praises the nation’s “democratization”). In sum, except for specific social projects, AIFLD offers little strength to Honduran workers.

A further danger of blindly supporting the east-west, cold war theory of the world is that it keeps U.S. labor from questioning causes of unemployment, runaway shops, and declining wages and influence here at home. The world economic order established after World War II has been a great deal for multinational corporations—but it is a deal that has gone sour for U.S.

banks are doing well, despite increased world competition. While U.S. industry has declined, U.S. manufacturing multinationals’ market shares have held steady, and U.S. multinationals’ foreign operations have gained market shares. In large measure, multinational corporations do appreciate the attractive business climate AIFLD works so hard to produce: low wages and weak unions. Instead of investing and modernizing at home, many U.S. corporations are investing and building overseas. Furthermore, Reagan administration policies have promoted speculation and mergers in the US, rather than productive investment. International bankers have put a squeeze on debt-ridden nations, and as a result Latin American countries have aggressively increased low-priced exports while being forced to virtually eliminate buying U.S. products. The drop in sales to Latin America accounts for nearly 55% of the decline in U.S. exports from 1981-1985. Although they do not face the starvation and military violence that so many in Latin America do, U.S. workers have suffered greatly. Capital and management have taken an international perspective; labor needs to do the same (Cantor & Schor). To fight a multinational, it is necessary for unions to coordinate their efforts internationally.

With Friends Like These:
Promoting Real Solidarity

An example of the power of international solidarity occurred in Guatemala. On February 1, 1985, the Coca-Cola Bottling Workers ended a 376-day plant occupation and won important concessions from the giant multinational. This was a special achievement considering Guatemala’s small labor movement and violent military. Crucial for victory were a strong local union, a national support network, and extensive world-wide assistance promoted
by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (see Eisner, p.5). Not surprisingly, AFLD and its affiliated Guatemalan unions did not support the strike.

The situation is becoming desperate for many in Latin America. A U.S. labor delegation to El Salvador reported that workers who once remained quiet due to fear of the death squads are speaking out. People were taking the risk of organizing to feed their families adequately, whether or not they supported the guerrillas (National Labor Committee, p. 8). In the U.S., workers face plant closings (or plant relocations), and underemployment in nonunionized jobs. This while the AFL-CIO hierarchy maintains a larger budget for its foreign policy initiatives than for domestic organizing.

Recognizing the need for international solidarity, unionists in the U.S. are speaking more forcefully to oppose the policies of the AFL-CIO leadership. Labor committees throughout the U.S. are organizing at the grassroots level. Unionists took part in unprecedented numbers during the April 25, 1987 National Mobilization for Justice and Peace in Central America and Southern Africa in Washington D.C. Unionists comprised a quarter of the estimated 100,000 persons who demonstrated their concern at the Mobilization. Unions representing more than half of this country's organized workforce have joined together to form the National Labor Committee in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador. Together with allied associations, the National Labor Committee now provides an institutional structure to vigorously challenge labor's cold warriors. And the cloak of secrecy covering the AFL-CIO's international activities is being lifted. The first floor debate on foreign policy ever at an AFL-CIO convention occurred in October, 1985. At the 1987 convention a resolution was passed calling for an end to support for the contras and a negotiated end to El Salvador's civil war.

These progressive initiatives indicate that many unionists are frustrated with the undemocratic workings and overall weakness of their unions. With their militancy and commitment, many labor activists are at the forefront of battles for justice, civil and human rights. It is too easy for many working on progressive issues to view the AFL-CIO as an unchanging, reactionary institution--interested only in personal economic gain--rather than recognizing the wide range of opinions within the federation. Now is the time for building coalitions between the labor and Latin American Solidarity communities.

There are many ways to become involved. Solidarity and financial support are urgently needed by strikers at the Lunafíl textile plant in Guatemala and by several public sector unions in El Salvador who are fighting for decent working conditions, increased wages, and to save their unions. For information on these specific emergencies, see the Labor Report on Central America, March/April, 1988. (more information on these and other Latin American struggles is also...
available from CUSLAW). The United Farmworkers Union in the US urge all consumers to support their boycott of California grapes. Locally, community members are encouraged to support and become involved with the United Auto Workers, Local 2300, and the Tompkins-Cortland Labor Coalition. The UAW publishes The Bear Facts, and the Coalition's newsletter is The Working Press. Both organizations can be reached at 109 W. State St., Ithaca, NY 14850 (272-4108).

-Bob Greene

Thanks to Steve Hackel and Bob Bussel for their many helpful comments.

Notes

1. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) merged in 1955.


3. Evidence exists linking the murdered AIFLD organizers with the CIA. Particularly incriminating is the following: at a Supreme Court hearing in which the Reagan administration attempted to restrict ex-CIA agent Philip Agee's passport, U.S. Solicitor General Wade McCree, Jr. let slip that "just recently, two Americans have been killed in Salvador. Apparently they were some kind of undercover persons, working under the cover of a labor organization." (Kwitney, p. 348)

4. Entering into the 'social accord' was also prompted by anti-labor legislation passed at the time.

5. 23,000 US soldiers trained on Honduran soil in 1986; about 1,000 maintain a regular presence.

Bibliography


Kelly, J. (February/April, 1981). "AFL-CIO: Trojan Horse in Polish Unions" CounterSpy


Additional sources available on request.
CUSLAR Calendar continued

28th  Film Series: "Chulas Fronteras"
8pm  Anabel Taylor Auditorium, Cornell University.
29-30th Conference: "Race and Class in Latin American Popular Music"

MAY  6-7th  Film Series: "Frida"
See Cornell Cinema calendar for screening times and locations.

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

The CUSLAR newsletter is published bimonthly 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 (607-255-7293). We welcome your suggestions and letters to the editor.
APRIL

4th  After Dinner Discussion Series.
7pm  Note: Speakers Paul Rice and Rene Figeroa will not be coming to Ithaca this spring. Speaker to be announced.

7th  Film Series: "The Official Story"
8pm  Anabel Taylor Auditorium, Cornell University.

11th After Dinner Discussion Series: Professor David Craven, SUNY Cortland:
7pm  "State and Popular Culture: Nicaragua and Cuba"

18th After Dinner Discussion Series: Mary Jo Dudley:
7pm  "Bolivia: Shantytown Women Organizing for Change"

20th Lea Guido, General Secretary of AMNILAE (National Women's
8pm  Organization of Nicaragua) speaking on women, health care and the U.S.
     war on Nicaragua.
     Kaufman Auditorium, Goldwyn Smith Hall, Cornell University.

25th After Dinner Discussion Series: Debbie Hernandez:
7pm  "Power and Identity in Latin American Popular Music"

continued on page 23

All events are free and open to the public.
All "After Dinner Discussion Series" will be in the Commons Coffeehouse, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University. Contact CUSLAR for details (ph. 607-255-7293).