The Guatemalan Elections and the Prospect for Change

Well before dawn on Sunday, November 3, hundreds of thousands of Guatemalans trekked from their remote villages or overcrowded barrios to their assigned polling stations. They gathered in the morning light and waited the opportunity to fulfill their legal obligation to vote for Guatemala's first civilian president in twenty years. Some went to the polls with hopes that their vote would presage the return of the open political participation that Guatemala had enjoyed once before, during the years 1944-1954, when the popularly elected governments of Juan José Arévalo and Jacobo Árbenz were in power. Many more went with little faith that their vote would shift the political balance of power away from the military leaders who have ruthlessly dominated Guatemalan society in the 31 years since the overthrow of Arévalo’s government in a CIA-directed coup in June, 1954.

What are the future prospects for democratization and social change under the forthcoming civilian president in the context of the current electoral activity in Guatemala?

GUATEMALAN ELECTIONAL HISTORY

The most significant period for democracy in Guatemala was the 10 years of the Arévalo and Árbenz presidencies. After decades of misery and poverty under the rule of several dictators, a coalition of workers, students, professionals, and reformist military officers overthrew the 14 year-old dictatorship of General Jorge Ubico. Arévalo, a professor, won the ensuing freely-held elections with an overwhelming 82 percent of the vote. Under his leadership, health and social reforms, a social-security system, improved literacy and access to education, and labor's right to organize were gained. The hopes of more reforms to help the impoverished majority was bolstered when one of the reformist military officers that

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had participated in Ubico's ouster, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz, was elected in 1951 to succeed Arevalo. With 60 percent of the votes behind him, Arbenz initiated an ambitious program of agrarian reform aimed at addressing the root causes of rural poverty: a severely unequal distribution of land and an unorganized peasantry and rural labor force.

Such social advances were perceived by large domestic and foreign landholders, industrialists, and the United States government, as "communism" (for a full description of this period, see H. L. de Soto's "Bitter Fruit"). Arbenz's government was overthrown in a coup d'état planned, financed, and directed by the Central Intelligence Agency. The immediate effect of the coup, which placed the little regarded Colonel Castillo Armas in power, was the reversal of the agrarian reform, the abrogation of the constitution, and the disbandment of peasant and labor unions. In the following decade, most of the other reforms were also reversed. Since 1954, the electoral process has been marred by fraud, disregarded results, and military presidents. Only one person without military affiliations has been elected in the last 30 years: Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro, who served from 1968 to 1970, only after signing an agreement with the military giving away his powers to control the armed forces' activities. Results favoring the military, the agro-export sector, and industrialists have been the characteristic outcome of elections since 1954. Only very conservative civilians or officers that have the Army leadership's reversal approval are allowed to hold positions of power within the government. (In 1974, the Christian Democratic (DC) candidate, General Efrain Rios Montt, won the election, but lost anyway to the military high command's officially approved candidate. Rios Montt later took power in March, 1982 in a coup.)

Candidates, government officials, and army officers have, so far, not been allowed to promote reforms that would address the fundamental imbalances in Guatemalan society, most notably, the concentration of virtually all land and wealth in the hands of less than five percent of the population.

Elections and constitutional processes in Guatemala are not comparable to what we are accustomed to observing and participating in here in the United States. Several characteristics and historical patterns of the electoral process in Guatemala indicate that the holding of elections cannot be equated with democracy or popular participation in the political arena. First, Guatemalan politics are characterized by frequent military coups that are designed to prevent reforms or result from power struggles between younger and older officers. For example, in 1963, the army staged a coup against one of its own, ex-General Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, in order to prevent ex-President Arevalo from running away with a presidential election originally planned to legitimate the military-led regime. In 1982, younger officers upset with corruption and circumscribed promotion opportunities led a coup which installed Rios Montt in power. Rios Montt was overthrown, in turn, in August, 1983, by older officers upset, at least in part, with his
promotion of younger officers to positions of power in the government.

A second perversion of the democratic electoral process is the application of laws designed to restrict the sphere of political participation. Between 1966 and 1981, electoral regulations required parties to file membership lists of at least 50,000 names in order to be able to participate in elections. In 1966, 1970, and 1974, potent opposition parties still were denied participation even after submitting the required names. It is widely held that these lists were used by the security forces and death squads to target political activists for kidnapping and assassination.

Thirdly, the military has become independent of civilian and judicial review. Since 1966, when the military enforced its ban on strikes, to the present day, it has been recognized that the military is accountable for its actions and is the sole authority in matters which it defines as security-related.

A fourth incontestable reality of Guatemalan politics is intimidation through threats and acts of physical violence against political party officials, organizers, and supporters, as well as of anyone perceived to be acting outside of the system's limits (e.g., cooperative organizers, priests, and catechists who work with the poor, unionists, and student activists, among others). During the brutal regime of General Romeo Lucas Garcia (1978-1982), 20 leaders of the social democratic United Front of the Revolution (FUR) were assassinated, as were 15 leaders of the Democratic Socialist Party (PSD) and many more than 100 Christian Democrat leaders and activists. Others, killed for their activities include priests, journalists, 13 priests, 190 catechists, 27 professors, 110 labor leaders, and at least 50 university students. It is this legacy of terror that has limited political action in the past, and forced those participating today to restrict themselves to guarded statements that will not anger the military leadership and its allies.

Lastly, a high level of abstentionism is characteristic of Guatemalan elections. Since 1951, abstentionism grew with each election until 1982. In the presidential elections of that year, just 35 percent of the registered voters participated. At least one million eligible voters were unregistered. They are mostly poor urban dwellers, or residents of rural Indian villages. Guatemalan political analysts attribute low voter turnout to three causes: 1) many genuinely popular candidates have been killed or prevented from participating, 2) voters are apathetic because they see that the elected officials will be those that have military support, even if they lose the voting tally, and 3) the largest traditional opposition party, the Christian Democratic, has lost much support among the rural population because of its failure to denounce the military government's repressive actions. The DC remains, however, a strong party, as its showing in the elections of November 3rd demonstrates.

ELECTION RESULTS

Approximately two million of Guatemala's 2.8 million registered voters (of an eligible voting population of four million) went to the polls on November 3, 1982. With red crayons they marked their votes for the candidate of their choice below his name, picture and party symbol. They also cast votes for congressional representatives and for a municipal mayor.

Lawyer Vinicio Cerezo Aracel, 42, of the centrist Christian Democrats, made the strongest showing in the contest for president, winning 39 percent of the votes. He outpolled his nearest rival, newspaper publisher Jorge Carpio Nicolle, 35, of the populist Union of the National Center, by nearly two-to-one. Carpio garnered 21 percent of the votes. Jorge Serrano Elias, 40, of the Protestant fundamentalist-oriented Democratic Party of National Cooperation (PDCH) surprised many with his strong third-place finish (perhaps supported with votes from the 25 percent of the Guatemalan population that is Protestant).
taking 14 percent of the tally. The old hand of Guatemala’s political scene, Mario Sandoval Alarcon, 62, of the ultra-rightist Movement for National Liberation, mustered a less than expected 12 percent. The only left-of-center candidate, 39 year-old Mario Galvez Martines of the Social Democratic Party, who returned from exile to campaign in the face of acts of violence against his supporters, took five percent of the vote, just enough to qualify his party for future elections. Defaced, spoiled, unmarked, or incorrectly marked ballots accounted for about seven percent of the votes cast. These ballots reflect both a call for the casting of damaged or blank ballots by the revolutionary guerrilla groups and the effects of high illiteracy rates. The remainder of the vote was split between three minor right-wing parties. Results of the congressional and municipal contests were not available at press time, but it is projected that the DC won about 40 of the 100 seats, with the remainder going to the right-wing parties.

Because no candidate emerged with a majority of the votes as required by the new constitution (the old one only required a plurality), a runoff election will be held on December 5th between the top two vote-getters, Cereno and Carpio. Cereno asked Carpio to withdraw his candidacy and join in a national unity government, but Carpio refused to accept a minority share of the executive power, countering, “how are forces that are basically antagonistic going to cooperate in the same government?”

While Guatemalan political pundits are projecting Cereno’s victory in the runoff, Carpio’s reply indicates that victory may be a bitter prize. If elected, Cereno will face an immediate political crisis: the polarisation of Congress and the Guatemalan political spectrum between the right and the center. A breakdown of voting results shows that the rightist parties won half of the vote. If Cereno does not pick up supporters from the FDCM or MLN, as well as those of the PNB, he may squeak to victory with a thin mandate. One factor difficult to evaluate is what role may be played by the 29 percent of the registered voters who abstained from the first round of balloting. Another question mark in the position of the military. Rather than engaging in outright fraud, it is feared that they may try to influence the 90,000 men of the Civil Defense Patrols in favor of a candidate. To date, however, no evidence indicates that they are doing that on a wide scale. At press time, scant information is available as to how the second-round campaign is developing.

An important indicator of the sentiment of the Guatemalan electorate for change is to be found in the recent growth in support for Cereno and the DC. Despite the dissatisfaction of great numbers of its traditional supporters in the past decade, it can be argued that the DC has recovered some of that support during the past year. The evidence is that its percentage of the vote has doubled since the constituent assembly elections were held in 1984 (see October’s CUBLAN Newsletter for more information on the constitutional assembly and the political parties). Rather than being taken as a sign of solid recovery, this growth may reflect the lack of credible political options available to the electorate (nobody believes the Army would permit the PNB to hold the office of the President) and the historical reputation of the DC as the party of opposition and reform. Cereno and the DC are perceived as the safest choice, for they are thought to be unlikely to implement more repression or to support violent responses to social protest.

The elections and the progress of the constitutional process in Guatemala are not only conditioned by political maneuvering and the threat of violence, but by several other trends, both immediate and long-term. We turn now to examine the growth of the military’s role in the economy and to the trajectory of the current economic crisis which has been precipitated by the dictatorship’s failure to adequately manage the economic resources at its disposal.
This will be followed, in turn, by summaries of the military's growing political clout, its counterinsurgency program, the renewal of human rights concerns as a topic of political and social debate, and the policies of the United States towards Guatemala.

**Economic Crisis**

The elections are occurring in the midst of Guatemala's worst economic crisis since the 1930's. The military government has financed its destructive colonization schemes in the northern belt of the country, its corruption-ridden development schemes (particularly hydroelectric projects), and its counterinsurgency strategy with short-term, high-interest loans largely obtained from foreign banks. Less costly loans and credits from public-sector development banks and agencies (like the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program) have been few and slow in coming because of Guatemala's outcast status due to its dismal human rights record (see below). Between 1979 and 1985, Guatemala's foreign debt rose from US$600 million to $3.5 billion, a nearly six-fold increase.

Concurrent with the mounting debt, the country has found itself increasingly short of the necessary foreign exchange with which to repay the loans. The shortage is mainly attributable to the a doubling of its balance of payments deficits as a result of declining earnings from exports. 60 percent of the dollars Guatemala earns from exports will go to debt service in 1983. On the one hand, Guatemala’s traditional exports of coffee, cotton, and sugar have brought lower prices on oversupplied world markets and tourism to the country has declined 25 percent from 1979 levels. On the other hand, imports to keep the Army, industry, and the agro-export sector supplied have increased, as have the costs of borrowing (i.e., higher-interest rates). The crisis is exacerbated by the businessmen and military officers shifting an estimated $2 billion to foreign bank accounts or properties since 1979. The nation's Gross Domestic Product totals reflects these negative trends. It shows that overall growth since 1979 is nil, and declining for the past three years.

A direct effect of the crisis is the deterioration in an already poverty level standard of living for 80 percent of the population (those earning less than $300 per capita annually). Inflation is rising rapidly, and it is estimated it will reach at least 50 to 70 percent in 1985. The quetzal, Guatemala's currency, has fallen from a 50-year-old standard of parity with the US dollar to 3.5 quetzales to the dollar. It is expected to lose another 20 percent of its value in the coming six months. Unemployment and underemployment is hovering at exactly half of the total workforce. Wage levels have not kept pace with inflation. The worst hit have been rural workers, who are earning just 30 cents (US) per day. Urban industrial workers are little better off, and even government employees' wages are lagging behind. The prices of basic goods have doubled between August, 1984 and September, 1985. Real per capita income has fallen to 1971 levels. The reduction in purchasing power below levels sufficient to meet basic needs is indicated by the fact that 40 percent of the population cannot afford a minimum diet. In sum, the economic crisis has struck harshly at the poorest of the poor: peasants, rural workers, urban industrial workers, the unemployed, and the underemployed. It is reported that the informal sector economy (a category that includes people employed in such activities as street vending, scavenging, running errands, or shining shoes) is supporting about one million people. Competition for vending spaces on the sidewalks, along the streets, and in the alleyways of Guatemala City is fierce.

The unity of interests between the military government and the business sector also has been strained by the crisis. The government has clashed with the commercial organizations over enactment of revenue-generating tax increases. The tax rate is the lowest in Central America, nevertheless, the commercial
and agricultural interests successfully campaigned for a partial rollback of the new taxes. Continued pressure seems to have kept active collection enforcement to a minimum. Despite the military's strength, it cannot afford the simultaneous alienation of the masses and the business elites. Generating revenues and enforcing tax collections will be necessary steps in any program to recover from the crisis. It seems doubtful that a civilian government, especially a PD led one, will be able to muster the political will to enact and carry out laws that the powerful military was unable to.

Tension between the military and the private sector also is a product of the increasingly powerful economic position of the armed forces and its leaders. The military has supported public sector industry, especially when it is under its control. The military, as an institution of government, owns hotels, a bank, a cement factory, a weapons factory, and several other industrial enterprises. Furthermore, Army generals have encroached on the domain of the traditional landed oligarchy by taking title to public lands or stealing title from Indian communities. For example, it is estimated that General Romeo Lucas Garcia grabbed over 100,000 acres during his dictatorship from 1978 to 1982. These vast tracts of land are valuable for both their agricultural and mineral potential. Preference for lower cost development assistance (low-interest loans and grants) has gone to the military's and officers' enterprises, thus angering the private sector's members who are forced to compete for scarce loans at higher interest rates. The military's mismanagement of the economy has resulted in weakened consumer demand for both domestic and imported products. Government purchases of overpriced products from military factories and businesses, or the demanding of kickbacks, have also cut the private sector's profits. The effect of the above factors has been to reduce the businessman's faith in the military government as a representative of his interests. Carpio, Serrano, and Sandoval picked up significant business support for their campaigns, perhaps reflecting the private sector's perception that the growth of the military's economic role must be curtailed.

Few solutions present themselves to the incoming civilian president. The crushing debt burden must be addressed before it swallows even more of the country's earnings. It is widely held that one impetus for the military to distance itself from the government apparatus is that new loans will not be forthcoming as long as it is in power. The changeover to a civilian government thus becomes part of a military strategy to appease its domestic critics as well as to preserve the bases of the wealth it has constructed so painstakingly over the last 25 years. One possible solution is a halt to debt repayment until the economy is stabilised. This is unlikely, for it would discourage the possibility of new inflows of capital. Tax increases are problematical for the reasons outlined above. Labor's demands for wage increases will have to be at least partly met. How they are met will tell much about the political courage of the new president. If the old methods of repression are relied upon, then the outcome for political stability may be negative and a new crisis of political authority may set the stage for another military takeover. In sum, the economic constraints facing the new government are likely to put it in a position in which it cannot please both the masses who elected it and the powers that permitted it to take office.
After suppressing the rebellion, the Army moved to establish financial independence to complement its political and military potency. Large swaths of land were appropriated by leading officers, and the Army began to establish the other interests outlined above. The military had moved from being the guardian of others’ interests to those of their own. The Guatemalan military’s economic presence makes its impact felt broadly. Contrast this with the Salvadoran military, which has a leading political role but has lesser economic influence. The Guatemalan armed forces have ceased to be a dependent branch of government, and instead became the dominant force within the political system and civil society. All other sectors of society must negotiate with it. Its candidates ran in and won fraudulent presidential elections held in 1970, 1974, 1978, and 1982. The Army was well-positioned, therefore, to respond quickly to the quickening urban and rural unrest that began in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that struck in 1976.

Peasant leaders, union members, religious activists, students, and political party organizers were assassinated and “disappeared” by security forces and death squads as the government’s program of “pacification” began in 1978. When mass protests and strikes continued to occur, even in the face of the repression of the popular movement’s leadership, the political violence component of the counterinsurgency strategy was widened. The result was a rapid increase in murders and disappearances linked to the security forces and collaborating death squads in the cities and towns. Massacres of rural Indian communities regarded as supporting the insurgency multiplied. The main results of the government’s program of political murder and ethnic cleansing are summarized below:

- 440 villages were destroyed
- 50 to 75 thousand persons were killed or disappeared
- up to 300,000 persons have fled the country
- 500,000 or more persons are displaced within the country
- at least 100,000 orphans have been created
- the rural economy is near ruin
- 900,000 men between the ages of 18 and 60 have been forced to join the Civil Defense Patrols
- up to 75,000 people have been relocated to 'model' villages, another 400,000 are in zones called 'development poles'
- the military has established bases in all 22 provinces, as well as new access roads and landing strips.

The last three results above are components of the counterrinsurgency program's "consolidation" phase that began in 1982. It is this phase that differentiates the Guatemalan form of repression and civil control from that of El Salvador's. Following the ARMY's search and destroy sweeps through the countryside and rural communities, it herds the survivors into military-secured towns or into military-controlled camps called "model villages." Unlike in El Salvador, the armed forces have effectively restricted the rural population's freedom of movement, thus separating the people from the insurgents and from their fields. Without access to their fields, the survivors of the military's bloody sweeps are dependent on their oppressors for food and shelter. The consolidation process is furthered by the formation of the controlled males into the so-called "Civil Defense Patrols."

Participation in the local Civil Defense Patrol (CDP) is required and unpaid for every male from the ages of 18 to 60. Under military control, some 900,000 men from rural villages and small towns serve as the Army's "eyes and ears." They must serve at least once every two weeks in larger towns, and as often as every third day in smaller villages. The CDP's are active around the clock. Their tasks include guarding strategic locations (e.g., bridges and municipal halls), monitoring the population's movements, and joining the ARMY in sweeps of the mountains in search of guerrillas or internal refugees who are still in hiding. Failure to fulfill patrol duties is regarded as a subservient act for which the punishment can range from fines to death.

The patrols serve the ARMY's strategy in other ways. First, the patrols act as a buffer between the military and the civilian population. The patrols are seen as both the defenders and oppressors of the community. Second, they are vehicles for indoctrination, for patrol duties include the recital and dissemination of political slogans that promote the government's image. Third, the patrols serve as labor for the construction of roads, landing strips, model villages, and the rebuilding of damaged homes. When they participate in construction activities, they are rewarded with food (much of it of US government origin). Lastly, it is probable that the CDP's help mobilize voters in remote rural locations.

The second major component of the military's counterrinsurgency program is nominally oriented towards development of the rural areas most damaged by the war (that is, the areas that most opposed the government). Based on a combination of population containment and control strategies used by the United States in Vietnam, by Israel, and by South Africa, the "Poles of Development" program is the centerpiece of the ARMY's propaganda. Advisors from the United States, Israel and South Africa have helped the ARMY formulate the program. The stated goal is to resettle the displaced population into highly centralised and easily serviced 'model' villages or into a geographic area suitable for "integrated rural development." Located in areas that experienced high levels of violence and destruction, the poles are centered around one or two model villages and are meant to draw the rural residents into relations with the government. The unstated effects, however, are more insidious: destruction of ties to ancestral lands, environmental destruction due to population
...entation, observation and control of the population, and a string of dependence on the armed. Grandiose plans call for investment of over 100 million dollars, but only $4 million has been appropriated so far. The Guatemalan government is actively seeking international aid for its projects. As explained above, it is feasible that a civilian government would be more successful at obtaining support.

Recent studies have concluded that the Development Poles program is thinly veiled counterinsurgency strategy. More importantly, it is argued in these studies that in several poles, the physical requirements for successful rural development are lacking—most notably, fertile soils, firewood, and water. The lack of fiscal resources for the poles is indicative that the Army is content with maintaining the fiction of development as long as it serves them to contain and control the populace. Unfortunately, international donors and leaders to often do not recognize that the Army places development goals second to political control.

Military control of the rural areas is further maintained by the Inter-Institutional Coordination System (ICS). This is a governmental body officially described as an instrument through which concerted efforts at development can be channelled. Each province has an IICS body that is responsible for the distribution of all public-sector funds for rural services or development. Private development agencies are required to advise it of their activities. The novel aspect of the IICS is that it is headed by the provincial military commander, not the governor. It offers the possibility that the military can maintain control over a large proportion of resources even after a civilian government takes power.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Guatemalan government has consistently named the worst human rights violator in the Western Hemisphere by the Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The last three UN General Assemblies have strongly condemned the human rights record of the Guatemalan government, as have the past three sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights. Human rights organizations around the world have joined in the chorus. Even the US Congress has rebuffed Guatemala because of its record of up to 75,000 civilian killed (mostly Indians) in the past five years, and another 38,000 "disappeared" since 1984.

Political murders and violence by the military and security forces continue today, although at a lesser rate than during the peak of the repression in 1981-1982. Documented disappearances in 1984 averaged 30 per month (often no documentation exists). Grave violations of human freedoms continue in the development poles. The human rights situation in Guatemala is still dismal, but one change is noticeable: human rights and the plight of the disappeared have become part of public debate.

This change is a direct result of a campaign carried out since June, 1984 by a group of relatives of disappeared persons. The relatives, calling themselves the Mutual Support Group for the Reappearance of Our Loved Ones (commonly known by its Spanish acronym-GAM) has organised the first public protest marches.

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"EL PUEBLO PERUANO NO SE PONDRA DE RODILLAS ANTE EL IMPERIALISMO"

Alan García’s pronouncement echoes the Velasco government’s rhetoric surrounding its expropriation of the International Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1968. García, like Velasco before him, is confronted with the necessity of reversing the “desarrollista” policies of his predecessor, Acción Popular President Fernando Belaúnde Terry to avert deepening economic crisis. Also like Velasco, García is a reformist leader seeking to broaden the distribution of wealth without a fundamental restructuring of the economy or society. And, like Velasco, García is having difficulty reconciling the conflicting goals of increasing agricultural production and providing cheap urban food.

But there are significant differences between the two regimes. García has a popular mandate unprecedented in recent Peruvian history, and, at the close of his first hundred days, enjoyed support from many former opponents on the right and the left. But his solid backing in Peru is counterbalanced by a climate of fear and uncertainty at the international level. Sobered by the history of U.S. intervention in Chile and Nicaragua the APRA government and its supporters are acutely aware of current U.S. Latin American policies and perceive severe limits to their ability to redirect Peru’s economy to promote internally oriented development. Finally, Alan has entered office during the deepest economic crisis since the depression — an era of severe inflation, dwindling national reserves, and increasing foreign debt, high unemployment, and eroding export prices.

García has initiated major changes in Peruvian economic policy. His independence from the armed forces has enabled him to emphasize butter rather than guns, reversing an eighteen-year military build-up; and government agencies are avoiding capital-intensive investments such as major irrigation schemes.

In widely publicized speeches, García has imposed debt repayment to 10 percent of earnings and has refused to conform to guidelines which have been so destructive to the Peruvian economy since 1976.

On October 5, the president introduced a series of economic measures imposing restrictions on foreign interests operating in Peru. The official exchange rate has been frozen for the remainder of the year, refund of profits abroad by oil companies is prohibited, large and medium-scale corporations are required to purchase treasury bonds amounting to 40 percent of after-tax profits.

The domestic impact of these policies has been a surge of optimism about the Peruvian economy. A CARETAS poll in late October showed 75.2 percent of those interviewed believing that García’s program would improve the economic situation of Peru, and 52.5 percent believing that their own economic condition would improve. Central Bank President Richard Webb has expressed confidence in APRA’s plans for reactivating the economy, noting that inflation was reduced to an annualized rate of 50 percent in September, and was likely to be less than 40 percent in October.

The effect of this program abroad was the U.S. decision to downgrade Peru’s credit rating to “value-impaired.” The decision, which appeared in the Wall Street Journal before it was officially announced, means that U.S. banks holding Peruvian loans will have to set aside reserves totalling 15 percent of the amount borrowed. This will make it almost impossible for Peru to get new credit from U.S. banks. The portion of the debt downgraded has been estimated at between U.S. $1.1 billion and $2 billion.

While the economic impact of the downgrading on the Peruvian economy is not clear, the political impact has been immediate. Support for the García government soared in the wake of his October 30 speech in Callao. His response was firm and instantaneous: "We
must make a front,” he said, “against those who want to oppose Peru’s right to govern its own destiny.” “We cannot continue to be a satellite of the international economy.” (La Republica, October 31, 1985) In response to the downgrading, the government has decided to continue the freeze on dollar accounts until April and not to pay token interest payments requested at the Seoul IMF meeting.

A second bone of contention between Peru and the US is the renegotiation of oil contracts with US based multinational corporations. An August 29 presidential decree rescinded Peru’s contracts with Occidental Petroleum, Belco Petroleum, and the OXY-Bridas consortium, on grounds that Belaunde had misapplied the law regulating contract negotiation. Conflict over renegotiation focuses on payments owed to the state due to OXY-Bridas’ failure to fulfill its prospecting and reinvestment obligations and non-payment of the per barrel tax on oil production imposed by the government.

Public statements of US intent are not available, but Peruvians fear that if the government imposes terms unfavorable to the oil companies, the US will retaliate by invoking the Hickenlooper Amendment. The Hickenlooper Amendment calls for the cutting off of all financial and commercial relations with nations that take over, expropriate, or nationalize US enterprises. The amendment authorizes embargos and confiscation of property located in North America. It was used as a diplomatic weapon in 1968 when the Velasco government nationalized the International Petroleum Company, but its provisions were never fully enforced. According to Dr. Alberto Ruiz Eldredge, a leading international lawyer, “The US government intends to apply ... the Hickenlooper Amendment not only in order to cut off all financial aid, but also to destabilize the government of Alan Garcia as it did the regime of General Velasco Alvarado.” (4 Nov. 1985).

The Peruvian government for its part does not appear to be looking for excuses for expropriation. Minister of Economy and Finance, Luis Alva Castro, has indicated that the government has no objection to the presence of the oil companies if they comply with the reinvestment and exploration provisions of their contracts. “If they comply with our conditions, fine. Negotiations of this type require a certain amount of prudence and reserve on the part of the negotiators. I don’t want to interfere with what the commission is doing.” (La Republica, 5 Nov. 1985).

The government is treading a narrow path. While acknowledging the inevitability of a continuing US presence in the economy, it
seeks to limit the outflow of capital and to redirect it toward internal development. Whether García can maintain this course depends as much upon the restraint of the US as upon his continuing ability to mobilize broadly based support within Peru.


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Update on Colombia

The month of November 1985 will be remembered in Colombia as a month of mourning. November 22nd, a torrent of mud submerged the valley of Armero causing the death of more than 23,000 persons.

Another tragedy of very different nature is also hitting Colombia. The truce between the government and the guerrilla groups operating in the country is collapsing. New violence is likely to hit this violence torn country.

On the 7th of November, the guerrilla movement M-19 (Movement 19th of April) started a commando operation against the Justice Palace in Bogota. After 30 hours of violent fighting more than 100 people were dead, among them 12 judges of the Supreme Court of Justice, about 50 employees of the Justice Department, 25 soldiers and 35 guerrillas including 5 members of the National Directorate of the M-19.

Guerrilla groups have been present in Colombia for at least 30 years. Endemic guerrilla activity and violent repression have left thousands of dead. President Belisario Betan-
the guerrilla forces. In particular the powerful Colombian army, saw the truce as a political maneuver on the part of the guerrillas to recuperate strength, obtain new militants, and rearm for new adventures. Many think that the army operated secretly trying to sabotage the president’s peace effort through the use of paramilitary forces. Leaders of the guerrilla groups, now carrying safe-passage from the government and engaging in legal political activities were killed in ambushes by "right wing terrorist groups". Scores of other militants and sympathizers of the left groups, were harassed, arrested and killed. The recent reports of Amnesty International and the International Red Cross denounced the alarming increase in violations of Human Rights in Colombia.

For example in a well publicised incident, on September 30th, this year, 12 young adolescents, influenced by the M-19, stole a milk truck in a poor neighborhood of Bogota, to distribute it "to the poor". The army surprised them, made them lie on the floor and shot them one by one. The next day fabricated pictures showing arms and grenades close to their bodies were published in the colombian newspapers. This imposture was subsequently uncovered and denounced on television by Colombia’s Attorney General.

In June 1985, the M-19, accusing the military of systematically violating the truce, declared the end of the cease-fire. At the time the organisation denounced the army for the assassination of 20 of its militants, and the disappearance of more than one hundred of its sympathizers.

The FARC have decidedly taken the path of legality. Together with the Communist Party, they are planning to participate in the April 1986 presidential elections presenting as candidate the famous commander Jacobo Arenas. Also the FARC accuses the military of not adhering to the cease-fire, and of conducting a systematic manhunt of their militants. In a recent interview a leader denounced the killing of 70 militants in the last 4 months. The organization has decided to prolong the truce until December of this year. There seem to be enormous pressure to push the organization back into clandestinity.

It is easy to see M-19 takeover of the Palace of Justice as an act of political and military insanity, however it must be considered that this action was a last desperate effort by the rebels to force the government to reopen negotiations. The rebels wanted publication of official documents on the collapse of the peace process, and to focus public opinion on army abuses. These may seem to be reasonable demands, however the group dramatically misjudged the fact that President Betancur, pressured by the military, had no political space to negotiate. A bloodbath followed. Violent armed confrontations are continuing.

A tragic consequence of the drama of Bogota, is that the M-19 could have involuntarily reinforced the conservative right-wing in Colombia.

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

The CUSLAR office is in G-29 Anabel Taylor Hall at Cornell. (256 7293) The office is open to the community on weekdays. Weekly meetings are held on Mondays at 5pm in Anabel Taylor.
Pledge of Resistance

For five weeks in September and October, Syracuse Criminal Court was the scene for the political trial of forty-six protestors organised in seven affinity groups. They had been charged with criminal trespass for sitting in at the congressional offices of Representative Wortley and Senator D’Amato. The protest was in response to the contra aid bills, passed by both the Senate and the House, resulting in $27 million in so-called "humanitarian aid" to the U.S.-funded contra forces seeking to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government.

All of the defendants were found guilty by Judge Mathilde Bersani, who imposed sentences ranging from fines of $100 (plus $60 court costs) and one year’s conditional discharge to 20 days in jail. Two members of the Syracuse Women’s affinity Group received consecutive sentences of 45 and 60 days in jail, partly as a consequence of their participation in previous protest actions. During sentencing, Judge Bersani repeatedly required the defendants to incriminate themselves by "confessing" to previous civil disobedience actions. In addition, attendance at previous trials was used as grounds for imposing harsher sentences. Both of these practices are violations of legal and constitutional rights.

Although they were convicted, the defendants were at least successful in publicizing Representative Wortley’s and Senator D’Amato’s support of the Reagan administration’s policies in Central America. The defendants also made a strong legal case for the right to protest violations of law committed by our own Government. Some of the affinity groups presented the defense of justification, which consists of two parts: 1) an apparently illegal action (trespass) may be justified if it is authorized by a higher law or statute, and 2) an apparently illegal action may be justified to prevent a far greater and imminent harm if it is occasioned through no fault of the defendants.

The defendants relied on eye witness and expert testimony, including that of former CIA employees John Stockwell and David McMichael, to prove that an imminent and great harm did (and still does) exist because of the United States’ escalation of its illegal war against Nicaragua. The testimony established that the U.S. has systematically violated international and national law in its actions against Nicaragua, and proved that the defendants were authorized (in fact compelled) by both international law and the constitution to act as they did. Providing their own testimony, the defendants established that they had adequate grounds for believing that an emergency existed, and that they had previously attempted to prevent it from happening.

The United States Government, is in direct violation of prohibitions against war crimes through its military and financial support of the contra mercenaries, who deliberately attack civilian targets, abducting, torturing, raping and killing thousands of Nicaraguans. The U.S. also violates international laws and treaties (to which it is a signatory) guaranteeing the sovereignty of states by sponsoring an aggressive war against another nation for the purpose of overthrowing its government.

The Reagan administration’s policy violates national law including the Neutrality Act and the Constitution. The Constitution requires that the Executive give true and accurate information to Congress when seeking its consent for legislation and appropriations. Reagan and the CIA have deliberately lied to Congress about both the nature and purpose of administration policy vis a vis Nicaragua. It is a violation of the Constitution to wage war covertly without the open assent and declaration of Congress. In addition, the administration has violated the Boland amendment prohi-
Letter from Jail

November 20, 1985

We are currently serving consecutive 45 and 60 day sentences in the Onondaga County Jail in Jamesville, NY. Our crime? Urging Congressperson Wortley to respond to our concern that funding the contras only prolongs their bitter and bloody attacks on Nicaragua's people. These attacks are directed primarily at civilian targets: health centers, schools, agricultural cooperatives, and day care centers. The contras have maintained a consistent pattern of kidnapping, torturing and killing civilians of all ages.

As we sat in Wortley's office, last June 12th, more than 2,000 people across the country were also risking arrest to bring that message to their representatives. 46 of us in Syracuse were arrested awaiting a response from Wortley or D'Amato that they would initiate a positive step towards achieving peace in Central America. We were charged with criminal trespass. The only response we received from Wortley was that he had cast his ballot for $27 million in aid to the contras.

Without aid from the U.S., it is doubtful that the contras could keep up the war. Clearly our tax dollars are enabling these atrocities to continue. And even the financial costs don't stop with the price of the aid. By the time the two of us are released from this facility, Onondaga County will have spent over $10,000 "punishing" us for our action. Financing the contra's war on Nicaragua includes the cost of stifling dissent in this country. It is a price that neither our pocketbooks nor our consciences can afford.

Karen Beetle, Syracuse, NY
Carolyn Mow, Ithaca, NY.

Carolyn Mow is a member of the CUSLAR Newsletter Editorial Board. While serving her sentence, she continued to make an invaluable contribution to the newsletter.
Letter From Chile

I recently returned from Chile, after living and working for a year and a half in a poor neighborhood or “poblacion” in Santiago. As a lay missioner I taught school, participated in a Christian base community, and visited the women political prisoners.

Often, when we speak of Chile we focus on the more general political and economic situation, and the people remain but a faceless mass. There is a real danger in losing sight of the faces of the victims of repression and poverty, of the tortured and the torturers. My experiences, though limited, offered me the privilege to come to know so many of these people, to learn from their courage and testimony, and to share for a time their struggle for freedom.

One can not speak of Chile without first mentioning something of its history. After nearly a century of democratic governments, an unusual tradition in Latin America, the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende was toppled by military coup in 1973. It was anything but bloodless. Thousands of people were killed within the first few months, and over the years thousands more have been tortured and have disappeared after being arrested by the secret police. Today around one million Chileans out of a total population of 11.5 million are scattered over the continents, living in forced exile. The atrocities and human rights violations continue, guided by the iron fist of General Augusto Pinochet. The people want freedom and democracy. This deep desire directly conflicts with Pinochet’s fanatically held view that democracy is the seedbed of communism. He himself declared: “The so-called democratic system includes the struggle for power, and that therefore, opens the flanks to marxist aggression. That cannot be allowed.”1 For over a decade this fear of communism has “justified” the murder, rape, torture, imprisonment and exile of tens of thousands of Chilean citizens, atrocities which did not occur during Allende’s time in office.

Despite the seeming hopelessness of the situation, opposition to the dictatorship increases, though the repression does not cease. For the past twelve years, the military regime has maintained power by the use of systematic torture and violence and by continually terrorizing its own people. Sketching portraits of the poor and oppressed perhaps best illustrates the suffering and the struggle of the Chilean people.

Ana Maria, a woman in my neighborhood, could not feed her children on the twenty dollars a month that her husband earned on the government’s minimum employment job program. With the help of the parish priest she joined together with other women who were also hungry and formed an “olla comun” or common pot. They were excited, finally able to secure one meal a day for their families. Together they could survive. The self-maintenance mechanisms of a police state began to work against their organization. The women heard rumors of repression, some got paranoid, and all were frightened. As is the case with many of us, fear became the dominating force. Ana Maria left the “common pot” to fend for herself, isolated and alone— a harmless hungry woman. Hope lies with the women who despite their own well-founded fears stay together to struggle for their right to live.

Many courageous Chileans have overcome their fear and recognize repression as an inevitable consequence to any social or political commitment. Pablo’s parents are exiled in France. He and his three brothers continue to be true to the democratic ideals that resulted in the separation of their family. The eke out an existence by singing on buses and selling handcrafted jewelry in the streets. Each day, in trying to earn a living, they face possible arrest, confiscation of their merchandise, and fines. The current regime has made survival a
Pablo and his brothers are typical of the thousands of young people who risk daily their physical health and freedom and even their lives, not only for their own benefit but also for the well-being of their people. They realize that they have no future unless they do. Pablo and other youths in the neighborhood organized a summer camp for three hundred children, mobilized emergency help for flood victims, planned cultural events for the local community, and joined the monthly protests with bonfires and candles in the street. Such activities make them "subversives" in the eyes of the government. Pablo and his brothers have met face to face the consequences of their participation. They have been arrested, tortured and beaten, in addition to having sacrificed the security of their own home. Several times they sought refuge in our house as their home was under surveillance by the secret police.

Torture is institutionalized as a means of repression and for the purpose of extracting information needed to strategically suppress any opposition to the government. Although the specific stories of the twenty women political prisoners I visited vary, the subjection to torture is a common characteristic. Camila was pregnant when arrested by the secret police for her clandestine political activities. She and her unborn child were tortured for several days, primarily with electric shock. Her son Carlos, born in prison, is now nearly three years old. He has a nervous disorder and psychological effects due to the torture are inevitable. Both his father and mother remain in prison.

Of the over 300 political prisoners presently in Chile few have had trials, and none have had a chance at a fair defense. After serving four years behind bars Claudia was finally sentenced to three months for running an underground press. To add injustice to injustice another court ordered her to be exiled from Chile. Claudia went directly from prison to a plane. She now lives in France along with thousands of fellow Chileans - all strangers in a strange land. In the past years some exiles have been allowed to return. Back in Chile their exile continues for they find that with the passing of time Chile too has become an alien land.

Torture is systematically applied by trained persons; it is not an accidental occurrence. In 1983, 426 persons were reported to have been tortured, averaging more than one per day. Not all cases are reported. The methods are many, including both physical and psychological torture. They include: "the grill," electric shock is applied to sensitive areas such as the genitals; "the telephone," the simultaneous beating of both ears with open hands; "the submarine," the submergence of the head into sewer water until near suffocation; burning parts of the body, including sexual organs, with cigarette butts or forcing someone to sit on a burning tire; deprivation of food and water for extended periods of time; threatening to kill, torture or rape another family member; forcing someone to watch the torturing of a loved one; etc. Torture is not the problem of a select few. It scars the entire nation, the whole world. After being in Santiago for a while it becomes difficult to meet anyone who has not been touched in some way by the repression of the regime.

I saw Rosa around eight in the evening. She greeted me with a big hug, typical of Chilean hospitality. She told me that she was scared because the police and military had raided her neighborhood and arrested several community leaders. Rosa's son disappeared in the late '70s; most probably he is dead. In her fifties, Rosa is far from resigned. She participates actively in the Sebastian Acosta Movement Against Torture. Her fear proved to be well-founded. The secret police broke into her home late that night. After ransacking the house, they took Rosa and one of her surviving sons to a clandestine torture center. Later when I visited her in jail (after being tortured by the secret police people are generally released or go to jail) she commented that the
worst was not the physical beatings but the psychological torture. She was forced to listen to someone screaming. They told her that it was her son being tortured. They threatened to kill him and rape her daughter (whom they described perfectly along with details of her daily routine) if she did not sign a confession stating that she was a member of an outlawed leftist political party and that she had participated in the shooting of a policeman. Both are lies. She signed. After five months in jail without a trial she was released.

Despite Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Langhorne·A. Motley’s assertion during his visit to Chile in February that “the destiny of Chile is in Chilean hands, in good hands,” all evidence proves the contrary. It is a well-known fact that the United States government, through the actions of the CIA (spending $6.5 million on covert activity), and multinational corporations played a major role in the destabilization of Allende’s government and the subsequent bloody coup which began this dark episode in Chilean history. The scars run deep and many wounds are yet unhealed. In talking to many well-intentioned U.S. citizens, my stories of the repression appall them. They comment on what a blunder the U.S. made. Unfortunately, it was not a “mistake”; rather the overthrow of the democratically elected socialist government was a calculated operation which would and is being repeated today. Kissinger put it most succinctly when he stated that the issues in Chile were “much too important for the Chilean voters to decide.”

Ironically, despite the torture, violence, censorship, imprisonment, exile, internal relocation, propaganda, manipulation, hunger and unemployment, the hope for freedom and justice does not die out, rather the dedication and courage to fight for it grows. Chile’s youngest generation, born under the present dictatorship, have never known freedom and democracy. This fact always horrifies me but a recent letter from one of my sixth graders restores hope in the undying quest for a better tomorrow. Victor writes: (translated)

Cecilia, we miss you a lot, because in Chile there is no joy, because in the last protests there were many deaths, but despite the deaths we keep struggling for freedom, and so that there be no more torture.

(Sunday, Sept. 15, 1985)

Cecilia Schickel
October 29, 1985
There are other interesting human rights groups. For example, there is a group called the Committee of Political Prisoners of El Salvador, which is actually one of the most active political organizations in the country. They organize inside the prisons for prisoners rights, and participate in the national political debate by purchasing newspaper ads in which they have taken a position on almost every issue of conflict in the country.

Another sector consists of the Christian base communities which were the seed of the opposition movement in the beginning and the focus of the worst repression. Even the Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Romero, who supported the base communities was assassinated. I attended a march on the 5th anniversary of the assassination of the Archbishop, which was the first major demonstration in five years. The demonstrators were basically refugees from the camps in San Salvador, who have begun to organize. It was very moving, because as they marched down the street, they repeated the last words of the Archbishop's last sermon. One of the women of the Mothers of the Disappeared would chant with a megaphone, "In the name of God I command you," and the whole march would chant "Cease the Repression!"

The university students are also organizing. In 1980, under Duarte, the army invaded the university, destroying most of the buildings and killing many of the students and faculty. The university was closed for over four years, and just reopened last year, solely on the initiative of the faculty and students. (The professors are teaching for free and the students are paying a voluntary tuition.) Their major struggle is for funding for the university, but they also go out and support other demonstrations.

The most dynamic sector is the labor movement; there were more strikes this spring in El Salvador than in any spring in the history of the country. One of the most inspiring things I did was to talk to the union leaders.
Virtually every time there's a strike, somebody disappears, and the people who are picked up are the ones who organized the strike. And the people go ahead and do it anyway.

This past May 1st was the first time in five years that all of the sectors of the movement came together in one big demonstration. Above the march were Huey Helicopters, and if you looked up you'd see a machine-gun trained on you. For most of these people, it was the first time they'd been to a demonstration in five years, and they were very nervous. As the march took off, everyone was chanting the official slogans about the high cost of living etc. But as they went along, and they remembered what it was like to be out on the streets demonstrating, they began chanting, "Duarte, escucha, el pueblo, esta en lucha!" (Duarte listen, the people are in struggle!) By the time they got to the rally site, the whole march was chanting, "Yankee invaders out of El Salvador!" which is a very bold thing to do in the streets of El Salvador, with a Huey Helicopter flying overhead.

The CIA and the War Against Nicaragua

The following comments are very brief excerpts from presentations by John Stockwell and David McMichael at a symposium on the implementation of U.S. foreign policy by the CIA, held at Cornell on October 2nd. John Stockwell is a former CIA case officer who worked in Africa and Viet Nam, and was the chief of the CIA's Angola Task Force during the Angolan Civil War. He wrote a book about the CIA's role in this war, In Search of Enemies. David McMichael was a CIA analyst who investigated the alleged arms flow from Nicaragua to El Salvador and on the openness of Nicaraguan society. He is a senior research associate for the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, and also works for the Commission on U.S./Central American Relations.

On the Legality of the Covert War

[McMichael] [Jeanne Kirkpatrick attacked McMichael and others for testifying before the World Court] ... on the grounds that when such illegal acts [the covert war on Nicaragua] are carried out under the rubric of US policy ... they are somehow transformed into "political questions, not appropriate for judicial resolution." Well, how convenient, to change murder, rape, arson and piracy into political questions. ... She expresses alarm that United States citizens should appear before the International Court of Justice to "cooperate with a foreign government to undermine the legitimacy of existing United States government policy in the name of higher loyalties that presumably override a citizen's obligation to support decisions made through normal democratic process." Now this is the core of her argument and precisely its most false and weakest point. Is this policy legitimate? Is it the policy of the United States government, not merely of the President? And was this decision to adopt this policy made through normal democratic processes?

The answer to the questions is, no. ... [these covert activities] are all illegitimate acts under both treaty and law. These alleged policies were decided upon and carried out by the executive branch only, without either Congressional authorization or the legally required prior consultation and notification of the Congressional oversight committees, and in fact, against the clearly stated will of the Congress.
Does Mrs. Kirkpatrick's definition of normal democratic process include a deliberate campaign of lying and misinformation by the current administration over a period of five years in an attempt to influence public and Congressional opinion in favor of these so-called policies? My definition would not stretch that far.

**On the Reasons for the War**

[McMichael] This administration made the decision even before it came in - you can look it up in the so-called Santa Fe group paper - they were determined to get rid of the government in Nicaragua. ... there was a genuine and general feeling among many of those who assumed directing positions in this administration in hemispheric affairs that what Nicaragua and El Salvador represented was not so much a danger to them, not a threat to the United States, but a superb opportunity to end the so-called Vietnam syndrome. By reversing the policies of "Carter the wimp" and instead showing some muscle and resolve, the US could very quickly end the insurgency in El Salvador ... and eliminate the government of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas. This could be presented as an enormous victory.

I think what is driving this policy is a determination to return to the halcyon days of the early and mid 1950's, when the United States was demonstrably the master of the world. In the early 1950's the United States had over 50% of the industrial capacity functioning in the world and an effective monopoly on nuclear weapons. By 1950 the United States had organized NATO, which was completely responsive to US direction at the time. The United States also controlled the United Nations for all practical purposes. It was the Soviets who had to resort to the veto at the Security Council, not the US. This is the situation to which this administration wants to return. And it's impossible because it's a very different world now. But at least they want the impression of that kind of power. And where better than in Central America? They really believed they could do it.

**On the Arms Flow**

[McMichael] I found myself involved in this thing when I attended meetings ... in the fall of 1981 at Langley, when the proposal to form a counter-revolutionary force to attack Nicaragua was made. It was justified as interdicting the alleged flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador. I had some experience in analyzing this type of thing in Southeast Asia in the past. I was alarmed by the fact that the evidence I was reviewing did not support the claim that there was such a flow of arms. I raised this question. And in spite of my age, I actually believed for some months that the purpose of this force was to interdict a flow of arms. I kept telling them, "Look, I worked on this stuff in Southeast Asia. You are going about this all wrong. You have to do an analysis of where the flow is coming from and just what is involved and who's doing it, and then act." It wasn't until sometime later that I became aware that the purpose of this [covert action] was precisely what the Congress prohibited with the Boland Amendment in December of 1982 ... the destabilization and overthrow of the Nicaraguan government.

**On the Responsibility for the War**

[McMichael] What we are talking about here is the whole manner and context in which [the US is] conducting [its] foreign policy. We can focus tonight on the Central Intelligence Agency as one aspect of this. But please ... do not fall into the trap of focusing [only] on the this scarecrow, this stalking horse, the CIA. It is a much larger problem. The CIA does not run the foreign policy of the United States. It does the dirty jobs, yes, but it does these jobs at the direction of the President of the United States. ... You're not dealing here with a single phenomenon of an evil, aberrant, mutant arm of the US government. You are dealing with the policy of [the President of the United States].
On the Nature of the War

[McMichael] On my last visit to Nicaragua in August and part of September, I went to a detention center in Juigalpa because they had captured, 3 days before, a 14 year-old contra, who was nicknamed El Chichi Meco, which means "the little mascot". His name was Angel Espinosa. The problem with talking to this kid was that there was nothing behind the eyes. Now he had been, as they say, walking with the contras since the previous December. For a little kid he had managed to haul along an M-60 machine gun most of that time, made in the USA. He was charged with 8 murders, personally committed, as well as participation in a number of mass rapes. This kid didn’t have any sense that what he did was wrong. Except that he had been told now that it was wrong.

He described to me the first time he was asked to "pay the bill", to assassinate someone by the leader of this group. He was somewhat reluctant, because he had never done that before. They told him, "Jump up and down a few times, scream as loud as you can, and then stick it in." And he said after that it was okay. This is the war that is being fought in Nicaragua today.

[Stockwell] The idea is you send these teams in raiding. You are not trying to capture territory. You’re trying to create a situation where society and the economy comes to a halt. It ceases to function as a country. People are afraid to live and work normally... government programs grind to a halt. International capital is scared away. And we systematically go to Mexico or Venezuela as they are about to help Nicaragua with some oil and say, "Don’t want you to do that. We’re going to put pressure on you so that if you do, we’re going to do this." We actually deprive Nicaragua of the resources they need to keep their country functioning. The contras have systematically blown up bridges, sawmills, schools, and health centers. They have systematically killed teachers, health workers, elected officials, government administrators... the CIA has sent in what they call UCLAs – Unilaterally Controlled Latino Assets [i.e. direct CIA employees] – to blow up oil and port facilities. They’ve bombed Managua, the capital. Not U.S. Air Force type bombing, but for economic and psychological effect. The UCLAs mined the harbors.

The Disappearance of the Center

[McMichael] Look at it this way, in terms of politics...[the opposition had plenty of space to operate in the middle, but they] internalized this belief (a realistic one given Nicaragua’s history) that what the U.S. wants to happen in Central America will happen. They can say, "The Sandinistas are right in holding that we can pursue an independent policy [from the U.S.], but that’s Quixotic. In the end, the U.S. will prevail." Well, as a politician, what are you going to look at? Who is going to pick up the marbles in the end? Those who come riding into Managua with the victorious contras? Or those who stayed and worked in the space that’s left? This is the reason you see Arturo Cruz, Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, Alfonso Robelo, and the rest in Costa Rica today. It’s not because of any persecution. They made a rational decision to leave.

On the Use of Lies in Defense of Policy

[McMichael] The statements made concerning the arms flow, concerning the nature of the Nicaraguan government, are lies—flat, pure and simple lies. What are we dealing with here? The people who come forward to speak and defend this policy typically are not spokespersons for the CIA. These are people who are in public offices in our foreign policy establishment. [As the English ambassador Henry Watton said 350 years ago] an ambassador is an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of the commonwealth. ... I want to emphasize to you, as clearly as I can, that... all persons who speak in the area of foreign policy, when
instructed by their superiors to lie, to misrepresent, they do lie, they do believe they are performing an honorable act by lying, and they expect to be well rewarded for doing this. And this is not this administration only, but all administrations which I have known for the past 25 to 30 years ...

[Stockwell] One third of my staff (of 130 people) on the Angola Task Force were professional propagandists whose task was to get articles into major media, western publications, the Washington Post, for example, and television. They promoted our lies and made it look like the Russians and the Cubans were doing evil things in Angola and that we were championing the cause of justice and democracy. We wrote articles and statements which were read and paraphrased endlessly by Ambassador Patrick Moore at the United Nations. We wrote the statements that would be read by the State Department spokesperson - all of them lies. ... We also conspired to perjure ourselves before Congress, to deceive them as to what we were doing because what we were doing was in fact illegal and immoral and the public would have shut it down if they had known the truth. By conspiracy, I mean the staff, including myself, briefed Bill Colby, the CIA director, and discussed his testimony [to Congress] ... "Remember, sir, last week you said this. If they ask you, don’t contradict yourself, because this has happened in between." That’s conspiracy to commit perjury.

Chamorro’s Testimony on Lobbying Congress

[McMichael] Just to add to John’s point on the electoral use of the Contras, I will quote here from Edgar Chamorro’s sworn statement [before the World Court]: "It was important to these officials and to the CIA to obtain additional appropriations of funds from the Congress. Our CIA colleagues enlisted us to lobby congress for these appropriations. I attended meetings at which CIA officials told us that we could change the votes of many members of Congress if we knew how to sell our case and place them in the position of looking soft on Communism. They told us exactly what to say and which members of Congress to say it to. They also instructed us to contact certain prominent individuals in the home districts of various members of Congress as a means of bringing pressure on these members to change their votes. At various times Adolfo Calero, Zeledon Salazar Rodriguez, Adolfo Cales, and I participated in these lobbying activities."
rallies, and sit-ins since the tragic Spanish Embassy massacre of January 31, 1980. In that tragedy, 39 peaceful protesters and embassy personnel were burned alive when the Guatemala City police fire-bombed the embassy without even attempting negotiations. GAM's public activities have called international attention to the plight of the disappeared in the country. Even the U.S. Congress has called on Guatemala to respect GAM. Their activities have not gone unnoticed by the military leadership. General Oscar Mejía Víctores has denounced them as "subversive." Shortly after he issued that denunciation, two members of GAM's leadership were brutally murdered. The Archbishop of Guatemala City, Prospero Penados del Barrio, publicly blamed the security forces for their deaths. Dozens of threats have been received by the surviving leaders and by some of the more than 400 families that comprise GAM's membership.

Human rights and the resolution of disappearances only became campaign issues after GAM occupied the constituent assembly last year, protested in front of the National Palace, and most recently, occupied the Metropolitan Cathedral during the final three days of the campaign. The occupation of the cathedral was designed to pressure the candidates to take a stand on these issues.

Cereno was a particular target of GAM, for they recognized that he may soon be in the president's office and in a position to investigate the circumstances of the detained and disappeared. Cereno, however, gave an answer reminiscent of a reply he gave earlier to a question about agrarian reform, "I cannot advocate agrarian reform because it would not be tolerated by the military." This time he said, "We are not going to be able to investigate the past, we would have to put the entire Army in jail." He limited his commitment to asking for the security forces to investigate their files and to bring before the judicial system anyone in their custody who had yet to be charged. No candidate even would dare to discuss trying those culpable for illegal disappearances, murders, and detentions, for fear of incurring the Army's wrath.

Despite GAM's success in bringing human rights concerns forward, the situation in Guatemala is basically the same as it has been for the past few years. Since January, 1985, at least 60 Indian peasants near the township of Patrún have been killed. Army and Civil Patrol atrocities continue. The Army stormed the grounds of the University of San Carlos and did over a million dollars in damage. The storming was in reaction to protests over price increases on basic foodstuffs and...
transportation. Over 800 persons were illegally detained, the whereabouts of many are still unknown.

The history of human rights abuses in Guatemala is lengthy. It would be a great achievement indeed, if the new president is able to eliminate them and bring those responsible for the deaths, disappearances, and massacres to justice. Unfortunately, the pattern of Guatemala's political history leaves little doubt that the military will not permit that.

THE US ROLE IN GUATEMALA TODAY

Details of US aid to Guatemala were provided in the last issue. The critical facts are that the US is prepared to disburse $10.3 million in military aid, $25 million in economic support funds, and $55.6 million in development aid to Guatemala in the coming two fiscal years. Restrictions have been placed on the disbursement of $10 million in military aid, the rest is in the pipeline now. The restrictions require that the elected president apply for the military assistance, and that the Reagan administration must certify that the government of Guatemala is making demonstrated progress in human rights. The Reagan administration has perfunctorily issued such certifications in the past (see Christopher Hitchens' excellent summary of a report on US human rights positions towards Guatemala prepared by Holly Burkhalter of Americas Watch in The Nation of October 12, 1982).

PROSPECTS

We do not believe that democracy has returned to Guatemala just because elections were held. There is ample evidence that the military has entrenched itself deeply in all aspects of government and economic life. The social disruptions caused by the government terror campaign of the past 31 years will not vanish overnight. Whether Cerros or Cardenas wins the election is not of as much importance as the military's position of no reform. Without reforms and a diminution of military influence, the dictatorship will continue, but now cloaked in the sanitized mantle of an "elected" government.

---Guatemala Study Group

SELECTED SOURCES:

Newspapers: Los Angeles Times, 11/2, 11/4, 11/5
Miami Herald, 11/2, 11/3, 11/4, 11/5
ACTION ALERT - SUPPORT THE PEOPLE OF GUATEMALA NOW!

1) A campaign exists in the US to support the efforts of GAM to get information about the disappeared and to call attention to human rights conditions in Guatemala. The campaign is called FINDING - Free Individuals Disappeared in Guatemala. For a five dollar or greater donation, you can adopt a disappeared person. You will receive a bracelet to wear as a symbol of your concern and hope for Guatemala’s disappeared and a card with the name and known case history of the disappeared person you have adopted. CUSLAR participates in this campaign, which channels funds to GAM. If you would like to adopt a disappeared person, send a tax-deductible check for $5.00 or more payable to "CRESP/CUSLAR" to CUSLAR, G29 Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York 14853. Be sure to include your name, mailing address, and phone number. We will send you your adoption information and bracelet immediately.

2) Write your senators and representative now and urge them to withhold disbursement of the military aid for at least one year. Impress upon them the tenuous hold that the civilian sector has in the Guatemalan government and that military aid could be a destabilizing influence. Ask them also to prevent the sales of military weapons and spare parts for helicopters. It is critical that you write today. Influential senators, like Senator Richard Lugar, Rep.-Indiana, will be pushing for a quick resumption of military aid. Only our voices united can stop the resumption of aid to a pariah military.

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Support justice in Central America!

The CUSLAR Newsletter provides CUSLAR members and other concerned individuals with the opportunity to present information and analysis on topics relevant to Latin America and the Caribbean. The positions of the authors do not necessarily reflect the positions of CUSLAR as an organization. If you are interested in writing an article for the Newsletter please call the CUSLAR office. We also welcome letters to the editors.
Calendar

December 6th
Colombia Volcano Relief Benefit
8-11 pm One World Room, Anabel Taylor Hall
Latin American music, poetry, and refreshments.

December 14, 15, 16
Wendy Shaul, the first American journalist to live for 11 months with the guerrilla forces in El Salvador, will be in Ithaca speaking on her experience in El Salvador interviewing and photographing civilians and combatants living there. For more information, call CUSLAR, 256-7293.

December 19, 20, 21
"Peace on Earth Includes Central America"
Upstate Pledge of Resistance Days
For more information on activities call CUSLAR, 256-7293

Don't Forget for Your Holiday Shopping List:
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