

Committee
On
US
Latin
American
Relations

CUSLAR NEWSLETTER

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Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University
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**A Rumble in
the Barracks**



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In Solidarity with the People of Haiti

At the beginning of 1991, the Haitian people chose their first democratically elected president in their history. Winning sixty-seven percent of the vote, Jean Bertrand Aristide began transforming Haitian society to benefit the least privileged. Hopeful for the future, for the first time, Haitians living abroad returned home to rebuild their country.

Seven months later, the U.S.-trained Haitian military High Command, backed by certain segments of the elite, ousted Aristide in a bloody coup. In the following 26 months an estimated 4,000 civilians have been killed by military goon squads. The illegal rulers have censored the press, imprisoned their enemies, and plunged their country into a dark nightmare of terror.

Forced out by violence, President Aristide has chosen the path of justice through peace. By pursuing the road of diplomacy and international pressure, Aristide has prevented the military thugs from gaining legitimacy as well as preventing greater bloodshed that would result from a civil war.

As Leslie Voltaire, a top aide to the exiled President, recently told an audience at CUSLAR, tough international sanctions will force the military out of Haiti by turning the elite against the army and depriving them of the lucrative drug trafficking revenue. But only, says Voltaire, if they know that Washington is committed to Aristide.

"U.S. military intervention is not necessary," Voltaire told us, "But the mixed signals given by the U.S. Congress and the Administration are sweet music to the ears of the military rulers." The mixed signals he refers to are the reports that the CIA was paying several top Haitian officers for information about Aristide. The information was later used in slanderous CIA "psychological profiles" of the exiled President, issued to the Congress and the Administration. The CIA had previously issued a profile of Gen. Raoul Cedras, the man who overthrew Aristide, as "one of the most democratically promising military officers since the Duvalier period."

The consequences of failing to stand up to the military assassins would extend far beyond the borders of Haiti. The "sweet music" of United States indifference to democratic principles is once again being heard with perfect clarity in the barracks of Guatemala, Venezuela, and Chile. The choice is clear. Only the will seems to be lacking.

--Dan Fireside

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The Committee on US-Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a project of the Center for Religion, Ethics and Social Policy (CRESP). Since 1965 we have worked in Ithaca and the surrounding areas to promote a greater understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. We are particularly concerned with the role of the United States in influencing the social, political and economic conditions of the region.

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CONSERVATION: FOR WHOM?

Displacement of the Rural Poor in the Dominican Republic

Fernando Secaira

"Beginning today, you are not allowed to work the land anymore and those of you who have cattle, must move them out of the park in the next 24 hours. You have caused enough deforestation here and we will not tolerate that anymore." (1) These were the words that an army officer said to a group of farmers when he arrived at a small village in the Los Haitises region, Dominican Republic on June 2, 1992. This was the beginning of a military operation launched by the government on May 30 to protect a karstic formation of 625 square kilometers, famous for its rich and lush tropical forest, high rainfall, abundance of caves and beautiful small islands along its coasts. It is also one of the sites with the greatest biodiversity in the Caribbean.

Despite the fact that a portion of the Los Haitises region was declared a Forest Reserve in 1967, and National Park in 1976, by 1989 almost 85% of the region had been devastated by the extraction of timber, the advance of the agricultural frontier and the subsequent transformation of forest into pasture. Approximately only 105 square meters remained reasonably undisturbed by 1990 (2). The remaining forests will not last long because the pressures to cut

the forest continue. In May of 1993, after years of failed attempts to stop deforestation, the Dominican President, Joaquín Balaguer, commanded the Chief of the Armed Forces to intervene in the region. 40,000 farmers were immediately ordered to leave the area.

By and large, many people, including urban

Despite the fact that a portion of the Los Haitises region was declared a Forest Reserve in 1967, and National Park in 1976, by 1989 almost 85% of the region had been devastated. . .

dwellers, journalists, conservationists and even farmers from other areas of the country, agreed with the government's actions. Some argued that the methods used by the government were not appropriate, but nobody doubted that peasants in Los Haitises should be moved out and compensated to preserve the natural environment of the Los Haitises National Park.

This story is not uncommon in other parts of the developing world. Throughout Latin America, Africa and Asia areas that are being destroyed and exploited by thousands of farmers and mining and timber industries have been designated

national parks. The general public, environmental agencies and conservation groups have promoted and supported this type of action, stressing the need to stop the destruction of the tropical forest. International non-governmental organizations, financial institutions, and governments from developed countries have

spent millions of dollars sponsoring such conservation projects (3). Their goal is clear: the tropical forest, the biodiversity, the sources of water, the beauty of the wilderness must be preserved for future generations.

However, during this process, the lives of the people living in what are now National Parks have been disrupted by the imposition of restrictions in the use of natural resources and access to land, by the introduction of new activities and very often, by displacement. The irony is that in spite of the sacrifice made by these people, the forests are still being destroyed. Farmers continue farming the forest, poaching the wildlife and cutting fuelwood for their consumption. The goals of conservation are not met (4). Obviously, the solution was not to set up controls or remove people.

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MEXICANS SAY 'NO TO NAFTA' ON THE ZARAGOZA BRIDGE

William Gibson

I heard on National Public Radio, the other day, a report that public opinion in Mexico has turned against the North American Free Trade Agreement. This is happening, according to the report, despite the lack of thoughtful analysis of NAFTA's overall impact by the government-controlled Mexican media.

In El Paso, Texas on Saturday, October 23, I participated in a local expression of this growing opposition. I had gone there for a meeting of the Environmental and Economic Justice Working Group of the National Council of Churches. Another member of the Working Group, Richard Moore coordinates the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. His network had worked with other U.S. and Mexican nongovernmental organizations to organize a demonstration against NAFTA.

At 1:00 p.m., several hundred people from both sides of the border converged in the middle of the Zaragoza International Bridge between El Paso and Juarez, Mexico. Banners and signs asserted, "NOT THIS NAFTA!" The crowd chanted "Give NAFTA the SHAFTA!" TV cameras recorded a press conference and a series of forceful speeches pointing to the negative impacts upon jobs, working conditions, and the environment expected to follow from ratification and implementation

of NAFTA.

According to the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, these impacts will constitute the acceleration of trends already underway. The Network's Statement on NAFTA asserts: "Workers, indigenous nations, people of color in the U.S. and Canada, along with workers and campesinos in Mexico would be pawns in [a] corporate battle for control of the world's markets and resources. By forcing down the living standards of people in the three countries, corporations believe they will gain a competitive advantage. This is the trend in the corporate world: the pursuit of cheap labor strategy to increase profits..." The rush to "free market" policies by the Salinas administration has led in Mexico to the closing of many small businesses; rising land speculation and growing concentration of land holdings; adverse pressures on the *ejidos* (collective farming communities), causing displacement of campesinos and Native people; and a drastic increase in unemployment,

estimated now to be as high as 27%. NAFTA, say the Southwest Network and other NGOs, will extend the policies that have these effects and will heighten the pressures causing immigration into the U.S. and human rights violations.

After the meeting on the bridge, we walked to Juarez and gathered outside the plants of Candados Presto a maquiladora factory owned by New Jersey-based Presto Lock. This factory makes locks for GM cars. It stands adjacent to a residential *colonia*. We heard more speeches, denouncing NAFTA and demanding that Candados Presto go away. The residents aired their grievances against the company for its irresponsible handling of toxic wastes. They told of toxic leakage, polluted water, and the rashes, allergies, respiratory problems, and other ailments suffered by the people. As explained in the Southwest Network's Statement, they had no confidence that the corporations under NAFTA would exercise any greater commitment to environmental justice than they've shown so far.

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Hope and Fear in Guatemala

Ramiro de León's First Hundred Days in Office

An interview with Felipe Rojas

In this interview, Felipe Rojas, research director of Guatemala Review reviews occurrences in Guatemala since June, 1993, when Guatemalan President Ramiro de León Carpio came into office following a series of coups d'état in Guatemala. To subscribe to Guatemala Review, contact: Guatemalan Education Action Project, P.O. Box 2151, Los Angeles, CA 90051, phone: (213) 653-4030. Reprinted with permission.

Question: Guatemala's current President, Ramiro de León Carpio was the former Human Rights Ombudsman for the Guatemalan government. In that role he worked with the popular movement promoting human rights. Has his coming into office improved the human rights situation?

Answer: We are now facing an increase in human rights violations. The worst case took place in Petén, where several people were killed during de León's first month as president. Another massacre occurred in Colotenango, Huehuetenango on August 3. This latter case has resounded internationally, because it happened during a demonstration against the militarization of the country, specifically against forced participation in Guatemala's Civilian Self-Defense Patrols.



President Ramiro de León Carpio flanked by Defense Minister General Mario Enriquez (l) and Army Chief of Staff General José Quilo Ayuso (r), June 30 (Army Day) 1993. [El Cadejo]

There has also been an increase in what we call 'selective' human rights abuses. For example, three women belonging to the Multi-Sectoral Forum, a broad based coalition formed during the coups this spring, have been viciously attacked. The most recent case occurred on August 31, when Olga Marina Ruano de García was kidnapped, taken away in a white van with tinted windows, brutally beaten, and released the next day. In fact, on September 13, 1993, the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights announced that they had received reports indicating that cases of arbitrary arrests, torture and illegal executions are continuing, and that the country still holds prisoners in clandestine detention centers. One such case is that of Efraín Bámaca, a guerrilla commander captured in combat. His North American wife, Jennifer Harbury, has brought out eye witness reports from fellow captives who escaped detention that he is being held and tortured in a clandestine jail.

Question: Ramiro de León had

been very critical of the Civilian Self-Defense Patrols before he became president. How did he respond to the massacre in Colotenango?

Answer: The Civilian Self-Defense Patrols were condemned not only by de León, but also by the United Nations and, of course, the popular movement. The patrols are a form of involuntary servitude, in violation of Section 34 of the Constitution of the Republic. This has been a key issue in Guatemala over the past several years. On the one hand, there has been a growing movement in opposition to forced participation in the patrols and militarism in general. On the other hand, when negotiations to end the country's armed internal conflict deadlocked over the human rights issue, one of the main areas blocking agreement was precisely the future of the patrols.

The Colotenango massacre

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showed that the military structure of Guatemala is willing to resort to the most extreme levels of violence to defend the patrols. Though de León criticized the massacre, he concurrently affirmed his support for the Civilian Patrols as an institution. It was undeniable that the Patrols committed the massacre; several witnesses, including foreigners, made public statements to the press. De León, however, had reversed his position on the Civilian Patrols shortly after taking office, stating that they are strategic and cannot be dissolved until after the URNG insurgency lays down their arms, which is the same position held by the Army. A few days after the Colotenango massacre, in an interview about the Patrols, de León stated that the indigenous people, who, of course, make up the majority of the patrollers, "like being in the Self-Defense Patrols because it gives them power." He has even gone so far as to advocate exporting the concept of Civilian Patrols to other countries. When he was Ombudsman, while the Army contended that the Patrols were strictly a military matter, de León argued that they were a human rights problem. The change is a clear sign that he is aligning with the army.

Question: De León has also been very quiet about the recent murder of his cousin, Jorge Carpio Nicolle, who owned the El

Gráfico newspaper and founded the UCN (National Centrist Union). Why is that?

Answer: What this case indicates is the great levels of impunity and injustice which reign in the country. In Guatemala, impunity applies when a peasant is killed, or even when a politically influential person is killed. The cases are never thoroughly investigated. In Jorge Carpio Nicolle's case, rather than do justice, the people

"In Guatemala, impunity applies when a peasant is killed, or even when a politically influential person is killed. The cases are never thoroughly investigated."

arrested and prosecuted are active members of peasant organizations working for human, ethnic, and political rights in their communities. Tomás Pérez Pérez is one of the accused. The Peasant Unity Committee, the organization with which Nobel Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú was affiliated in Guatemala, has publicly claimed Pérez Pérez as one of its members, proclaiming his innocence. In fact, the only evidence, so to speak, against Pérez Pérez or any of the other accused is their height and skin color, and during the identification process, they were wearing ski masks, covering their features. There is no other direct or circumstantial evidence against any of the accused: no finger prints, no motive, no stolen items, no ballistic matches. The gun residue analysis was also negative. Several articles in the

Guatemalan press question irregularities in the prosecution of the accused. The Carpio Nicolle family has challenged the work of the prosecution, stating that the defendants are 'scapegoats,' pointing out anomalies in the case, and that the authorities have not cooperated with the family in the investigation of the case, while calling for appeals of the decisions made to date. The family has also stated that they have additional evidence on the case which they will be revealing to the press.

The crime itself was full of irregularities. It did not follow the *modus operandi* for highway robberies

in the area where it occurred, and most of the valuables were left behind. The head of the band ordered that Carpio be killed, having recognized him from the very start of the incident. Given all of these factors, Ramiro de León's silence on the case is disturbing. Not only was Jorge Carpio his first cousin, they also founded the UCN together. It is hard to believe that he would not take a stronger personal interest in the case, unless there were a major political scandal behind it.

Question: What is the reason for the change in De León's stance?

Answer: What has to be looked at in the case of Guatemala isn't the person coming to office, or the promises he has made to correct a situation. One must see the

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PUERTO RICO: THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

Francis Adams

Puerto Ricans will soon be voting on their political future. A government-sponsored plebiscite, set for November 14, will ask each resident of the island whether they prefer maintaining their present "Commonwealth" relationship with the United States, becoming the fifty-first state, or seeking complete independence. Although the plebiscite is officially "non-binding," it is considered to be an important step in the nation's political evolution.

Commonwealth

For some Puerto Ricans there is little reason to alter their Commonwealth status. First instituted in 1952, this system is thought to have worked out rather well. After all, it is argued, residents of the island enjoy the highest living standards in the Caribbean precisely because of their unique relationship with the United States.

As a Commonwealth territory, Puerto Rico has been

able to attract relatively high levels of American corporate investment. Hundreds of American firms in such areas as textiles, electronics, petrochemicals, and pharmaceuticals have set up shop on the island. These operations have spurred economic growth, modernized local industry, and expanded

Twelve percent of Puerto Rico's arable land is used for U.S. military bases.

employment opportunities.

This investment, it is argued, only occurred because of Puerto Rico's "special" relationship to the U.S. American companies are exempt from federal taxes on income earned in Puerto Rico yet have unrestricted access to the U.S. market. These companies also benefit from the provision of generous incentives, such as subsidized factory space, recruitment of trained personnel,

and assistance in obtaining loans.


Commonwealth status also allows Puerto Ricans access to welfare benefits from the U.S. Government. Direct transfers are now about \$3 billion per year and account for twenty-one percent of the island's personal income and thirty-one percent of the Commonwealth Government's annual receipts. One-fifth of all U.S. food stamps, for example, go to Puerto Ricans. In addition, Puerto Ricans are not required to pay federal income taxes and have the right to emigrate to the mainland whenever they like.

Statehood

Other Puerto Ricans feel that the island should petition to become the fifty-first state of the United States. Although Puerto Ricans are officially American citizens, they are not allowed to vote for President or have Representatives in Congress. At the same time, Puerto Rican men can be drafted for military service and have actually suffered a disproportionately large number of casualties fighting in foreign wars. With full statehood, the 3.7 million islanders would gain equal status with other American citizens. They would be able to vote in all federal elections and be granted two Senators and as many as seven Representatives.

Statehood would also increase transfer payments to


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VENEZUELA: DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS

Silverio Gonzalez Tellez

When Carlos Andrés Pérez, of the Democratic Action party, was elected president of Venezuela for the second time, in December, 1988, a majority of Venezuelans thought that his government would favor the popular sectors of society, as happened during his original mandate between 1974-1979.

This belief was not purely wishful thinking. Despite the economic crisis and rapid depletion of the country's petroleum reserves, many people assumed that the state still had sufficient economic resources, and counted on the fact that Pérez's popularity depended on his showing concern for the impoverished majority. In his inaugural speech Pérez told the jubilant crowds that "what I want more than anything is that at the end of my term in office, the people carry me out of Miraflores [the presidential palace] on their shoulders."

Pérez' electoral campaign capitalized on his popular previous term in office, when the government was flush with

petro-dollars. At the same time, he carefully avoided the topic of the economic austerity measures that were to come. The strategy worked. It brought his Democratic Action party a sweeping victory at the polls, and made Pérez the first Venezuelan president to be elected twice.

Confident with the support of the majority, Pérez decided to implement a harsh program of economic "shock therapy" as his first governmental measure before the government's hard currency reserves were completely exhausted. The objective was the restabilization of the country's finances. In many ways, Pérez's program was stricter than the program recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). With the devaluation of the Venezuelan currency, the lifting of price controls, and the sharp increase of gasoline prices among the principle measures taken, poorer Venezuelans understood that the president was going to establish a government different from his previous regime, and that it was not going to favor them. In

February of 1989, just weeks after the announcement and implementation of the measures, a spontaneous, massive, and extensive protest arose all over the country. The government quickly suspended constitutional guarantees of civil rights and called out the armed forces. Hundreds of civilians died and "disappeared" during the four day protest.

After the protest, three themes began to dominate the debate around the government's political program: the scandalous corruption of the political and economic elite, the open price speculation on basic goods by the business and commercial sectors, and the unequal distribution of the costs of the economic crisis. These themes were not new to the Venezuelan political debate, but they had become explosive proof against the policy of "sacrifice" decreed by Pérez.

From his very first month in office, Pérez's political base quickly began to evaporate. But instead of acknowledging the crisis and entering into a negotiation process with different social sectors, the president decided to continue on as if nothing had happened.

The trauma of February of 1989 left a strong tension among people in the large urban areas. Rumors of new social explosions became more frequent. With the



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REFLECTIONS ON NAFTA

Teresa Vázquez

On April 28, 1993, CUSLAR organized "The NAFTA Debate" to discuss facts about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Two professors and two graduate students participated in the panel. The following is the text of the presentation by Teresa Vázquez, graduate student in the City and Regional Planning Department.

I want to thank CUSLAR for inviting me to express my opinion regarding NAFTA. Because many people in México and the United States don't have access to information about NAFTA and its implications, I think this kind of forum is very valuable for people to reach their own conclusions.

It is evident that we cannot separate into only one group those who are against NAFTA and those who are for it simply because of the many different interests that people are trying to protect and advance. These differing opinions are clearly reflected in this debate.

I was invited to this debate to talk against NAFTA. I'm not against trade, integration or economic development, but I also recognize that the current NAFTA document doesn't address cooperation, social, labor or environmental concerns. In addition, I don't think the focus of this discussion should be

whether we are against or for it. People tend to think that NAFTA will bring profound changes in México, but changes have already been taking place there in the last four years without NAFTA's intervention. México still has GATT, the World Bank and the IMF, but people have been neglecting to address their roles in this debate.

To facilitate favorable investment in México, new laws regarding investment, land, tax and labor have been passed. Those policies have been specifically created to privatize and deregulate the Mexican economy as well as to provide large subsidies. In each case, no input from the affected

Capital goes wherever it is most profitable and convenient for corporate interests...

communities was included; this is aside from the fact that many communities were not and still are not sufficiently informed about what has been done and how changes are going to affect them. For example: Many rural communities are unaware of the recent changes in land tenure ejidos which are communal lands in México that have been recently privatized.

As I mentioned before, NAFTA is

not the sole reason México is undergoing changes. And whether or not NAFTA is approved, these changes will continue to occur. Historically, cultural and labor market integration between México and the U.S. is nothing new, as evidenced by the always existent Mexican population in the US. Especially along the border states, there is overwhelming evidence of this integration; integration that is going to continue to exist even if NAFTA is not approved. It is honest to say that NAFTA has promoted and focused the discussion on already existing conditions; conditions very public in México but seldom recognized in the US.

I am glad that the sectors affected by NAFTA in the US and Canada have started to contest the supposed common interest between capital and labor. We are all witnessing that capital goes wherever it is most profitable and convenient for corporate interests without regards to labor and communities.

Corporations such as Panasonic and Smith-Corona have migrated South specifically to take advantage of low wages in Mexico and to avoid increasing environmental controls in the US. Corporations have found more and more obstacles for profit and operation in the US

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THE BASQUES: DESCENDANTS OF CAIN LOOKING FOR A FUTURE

Angel Mari Arrasti

The Basques, like the Palestinians, Kurds, or Maya Indians continuously have to struggle simply to find a place in this world. The struggle sometimes turns to violence when democratic means do not exist to achieve fundamental rights or to develop their own culture.

The Basques, I am one of them, are an ancient European people who would like to live peacefully in their historic land on both sides of the Pyrenee Mountains along the Atlantic coast.

Euskal Herria, the Basque nation is so small it would be difficult to find it on a map. It currently consists of seven provinces, four in the northeast part of Spain and three in the pyrenee area in the south of France. The international border dividing Euskal Herria was established in the sixteenth century. The total population is estimated to be almost three million, but most Basques live in the Spanish provinces (known to them as South Euskal Herria).

The Basque people are particularly known for their unique culture and their history of resistance and endurance. The most distinctive aspect of Basque culture is the language, Euskara. It is thought to be unrelated to any languages spoken in the world. Probably born in the megallithic age, Euskara is the only surviving non-

Indoeuropean language in Europe. Some believe that the language is related to caucasian languages (those from the Russian caucuses) or even to Japanese.

What is certain, however, is that the language, many time threatened with extinction, gives

The Basque people are particularly known for their unique culture and their history of resistance and endurance.

the people a strong feeling of community and is the key element in their cultural identity. Such is Euskara's importance for the Basques that they call themselves "euskaldunak" (the people who speak Euskara) and call their country "Euskal Herria" (the land where Euskara is spoken).

The Basques fought against the forces of General Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and they were

strongly repressed militarily and culturally. The use of Euskara was forbidden; hence to be Basque (euskalduna) was forbidden. Picasso's painting of the bombing and destruction of 'Guernica', a town that symbolized the Basque people's cultural tradition and home-rule government, dramatizes the repression.

Franco's regime (1939-1975) banned the Basque language and culture, in part to punish the Basques for fighting on the Republican side during the civil war and in part to realize the historical Spanish dream of a great and united Spain. Many other cultures have also suffered for this dream, such as the native people of the Americas, the Jews and the Moors.

During the dictatorship Euskara served as a unifying force for the Basque people. In the last few decades Euskara has flourished. The oral tradition has evolved and it is used in all aspects of cultural life

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In Review

CUSLAR BRINGS ERNESTO CARDENAL TO ITHACA

Cosmic Canticle

Ernesto Cardenal

1993 Curbstone Press

On Saturday, October 23, Ernesto Cardenal gave a reading of selections from his recently published book **Cosmic Canticle** to an audience of nearly 300 people. The reading was bilingual, with the English selections read first by Eduardo Penalver to allow the non-spanish speakers to enjoy the rhythm of the poetry as it was read by Cardenal in Spanish. Cardenal's poetry manages to combine the jazzy immediacy in intonation of beat poets like Ginsberg with the erudition and scope of such writers as Pound and Eliot. His style of reading conveyed the great energy, lyricism and clarity of his writing. The selections read also allowed those listening to get an inkling of the breadth and depth of Cardenal's concerns in **Cosmic Canticle**. Essentially, **Cosmic Canticle** is a poetic demonstration of the relationship between human beings and the universe. It is an examination of the development and role of our consciousness in the universe seen through aspects of science, technology and history. He asks: "But are we the observers of the universe by pure accident/or is the entire universe an evolution towards an observer?" Yet even with this set of concerns, the poem does not lack humor. Cardenal's reading also conveyed a type of



gentle irony that is found in many of his poems. Like many writers with empathy for what is tragic about being human, such as Shakespeare or Cervantes, Cardenal has the capacity to reveal what is funny about human existence.

The question and answer period was translated by Annette Pasapera. As Cardenal is a Jesuit priest, and the former Minister of Culture in the Sandinista government, the questions asked him after his reading ran the gamut from theology and morality to poetry and politics, as well as recent Nicaraguan history. He answered these questions quite graciously. He mentioned that he has been influenced by many writers from the United States, such as Whitman, and Pound. He also encouraged the efforts of Solidarity organizations in the United States, as well as praising those who work with the poor in Nicaragua and other Latin American countries.

One of Cardenal's most effective poetic techniques in **Cosmic Canticle** is the juxtaposition of the transcendent and eternal with the commonplace or absurd: "Likewise Christian-Democrats, left or right wing, and those whose paws and wings changed back to fins./We are not only product of the process but the process/and responsible for the process being free from it./ There's a theory that the chimpanzee is ex-human. Out of fear/he regressed from man." Anyone familiar with the foreign policy of the United States and our ongoing obsession with small countries like Nicaragua will not be surprised by absurdity. What is important about Cardenal's work is that it allows us to see that something more important stands in the background. Cardenal's reading began with the creation of the universe and ended with the death of

Reviews cont.

Laureano, a *compañero* and close friend whom he baptized. Laureano died fighting the *Contras*. The reading ended with Cardenal's imitation of Laureano's style of speaking: "I'd like to die like you brother Laureano and send a message down from what we call heaven/My fucking old Solentiname brothers, I never gave a fuck about death."

By ending the evening with Laureano's death, Cardenal's message seemed to bear witness to the importance of a single life even when we reflect on the vastness of the eternal universe.

--Lisa Rivera

[CUSLAR thanks the Lila Wallace-Readers Digest Fund and Poets & Writers Inc. for their generous support of this event-ed.]

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1992

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Tom Barry's new book, *Inside Guatemala*, is an informative and well-written description of this traumatized Central American nation. In sections of several chapters each-"Government and Politics", "Economy", "Society and Ethnicity", "U.S. Influence", and four others, Barry assembles a comprehensive framework for informed research and organizing work on Guatemala.

Barry's analysis is engaging, efficient and balanced throughout the book. Some examples: he draws comparisons between guerilla and popular movements in Guatemala and El Salvador, describes the Armed Forces' attempt at institutionalization in the context of a brutal counterinsurgency campaign during the 1980s and places the changes in agroexports in political context. The book also places these issues within their historical context.

Inside Guatemala should be seen as a

thoughtful reference book and not as an academic analysis of Guatemalan society. The chapters are concise and tend to stand alone, and Barry even provides some cross-referencing between chapters. Timelines, references, "for more info" contacts, and a fairly extensive bibliography make the book an important contribution to extant literature on Guatemala.

Published in 1992, the book does not cover President Serrano's *autogolpe* or other recent events, but does give an ample framework for understanding these events. From the rise in indigenous organizing to Guatemala's neoliberal business elite, Tom Barry carefully outlines the current situation and the potential for social change in the years to come.

Colonial Dilemma: Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Puerto Rico

Edwin Melendez and Edgardo Melendez, (eds.)

1993 South End Press

This book is a collection of highly insightful essays on contemporary Puerto Rico. The authors examine the island's historically unique relationship with the United States and the political, economic and social consequences of this relationship.

Puerto Rican politics tends to revolve around the "status question" with each of the major political parties advocating one of three alternatives-continued Commonwealth status, statehood, or independence. While the authors provide a fairly evenhanded analysis of the historical development and social implications of each position, they generally favor greater independence for the island.

Few poor and working class Puerto Ricans, they argue, have benefitted from the colonial relationship. This is reflected in the high level of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, drug addiction

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Puerto Ricans. At present, residents of the island are not eligible for the same level of benefits as other American citizens. Although they would have to pay federal income taxes for the first time, Puerto Ricans would also be eligible for billions of dollars more in food stamps, medical insurance and income support payments. As a popular slogan puts it "Statehood is for the Poor".

Independence

Lastly, there is a small but vocal segment of the island's population which champions complete political independence. The island's ties to the United States, they argue, tend to benefit a small segment of mainland and local residents at the expense of the vast majority of Puerto Ricans.

Clearly, the colonization of Puerto Rico has served American corporate and military interests. Because of the special arrangements established for American companies, average profit rates have been several

times higher in Puerto Rico than in the U.S. In addition, twelve percent of Puerto Rico's arable land is used for U.S. military bases, including the world's largest naval base, Roosevelt Roads. The island has been used as the base for U.S. military operations in the Caribbean, including fleet deployments and weapons testing.


At the same time, it is argued, the average Puerto Rican has gained very little in return. Although American investments expand employment opportunities, especially in the immediate post war period, the number of job opportunities has steadily diminished relative to the size of the labor force. Since the early 1970s, the unemployment rate has almost doubled and income levels have stagnated. Moreover, because a number of companies have closed their factories and moved to other low wage countries, the Commonwealth Government has moved to enhance the island's "investment climate" by decreasing wage rates and limiting union activity.

Colonization has also led to

the subordination of the Puerto Rican economy to the needs of American capital. Local production has become vertically integrated into the multinational corporate structure and is almost totally externally oriented. Factories bring in raw materials from abroad, assemble the products in Puerto Rico, then re-export the finished products. They then repatriate profits, estimated to be about \$9 billion per year, rather than reinvesting in the local economy.

Political independence would give Puerto Ricans the opportunity to stem this drain of wealth and reorient their economic system to meet domestic rather than foreign needs. Instead of the present system, with almost complete dependence on foreign capital, technology, and raw materials, industries could be established which harness local resources and produce for the domestic market. This would promote more even and widespread development of the local economy, expand employment opportunities, and lessen income inequalities.

Although a case can be made for independence, the nation's political future should ultimately be determined by the Puerto Rican people themselves. Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress has already eliminated the plebiscite's self-executing clause and is unlikely to accept either independence, which would jeopardize American economic and military interests or statehood, which is considered too costly. After nearly a century of colonial domination, the Puerto Rican people deserve the right to determine their own political future.



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Venezuela

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growing discontent among the general populace, and without organized channels for the expression of popular discontent (given that the most powerful political groups supported the government), the possibility of a military coup de etat began to surface. It was not long before it became a reality. In February of 1992, a group of mid-level officers from the Army, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez attempted to capture the President and take power. Other officers, loyal to the President, interceded and the putsch was defeated. Nevertheless, many people expressed a strong level of sympathy towards the goals of the rebel officers. Government legitimacy had reached a new low.

Several months later, in November 1992, other mid and high-level Army officers attempted another coup. This time it was more bloody and dramatic. There was aerial combat in the skies above Caracas and televised appeals to the public to fill the streets. People stayed home, however, and the coup was brought under control. It seemed as if the people had realized that supporting a dictator would be a stiff and violent price to pay for getting rid of a corrupt President.

The determination to "get rid of Pérez with votes, not with weapons", as it was said in Caracas, allowed people to console themselves after a year filled with social tension. Surprisingly, the mainstream parties and institutions, in an effort to fill the vacuum of official legitimacy, led the legal crusade

against Perez. The Attorney General issued an indictment against the President accusing him of enriching himself with public funds. The indictment was upheld by the Supreme Court and the Congress approved the temporary removal of the President from office so that he could stand trial. All this took place in the first few months of 1993, with the December 4 elections fast approaching.

The current situation in Venezuela is extremely unpredictable. The Congress named Ramón Velásquez, a former Senator from Perez's Democratic Action party, as the new provisional President. His appointment has produced a wave of optimism in Venezuela. The political process in the country seems to have begun to coincide with popular demands. The corruption trials of Perez and other top government officials continue to proceed, including that of another former president.

Many obstacles remain on the road to democracy, however. The economic crisis is still unresolved due to the political paralysis of the country. Public finances are once again in a state of emergency and to resolve them would mean more sacrifices for the people. These difficulties are compounded by the present situation: For the first time, powerful political figures may be found guilty of corruption and thrown in jail. As might be expected, these ex-presidents have reacted with verbal violence and have even been accused of fomenting terrorist activities against judges and journalists with the intention of creating a climate of agitation opening up the road to a new military coup that would lead to dismissals of

the corruption trials.

Another important factor on the horizon is the December general election. The leading candidate is Rafael Caldera, who is 5-10 points ahead of his nearest challenger, Owsvaldo Alvarez Paz of the Social-Christian party COPEI. Caldera is an independant candidate supported by a heterogeneous alliance of leftist parties. Although Caldera has been a long-time representative of the status quo in Venezuela- he founded the COPEI party and was elected President of Venezuela in 1968- in the upcoming elections he represents a candidacy outside of the traditional two-party system.

In the eyes of many Venezuelans, Caldera appears as an honest and experienced man. He is also the only candidate to express opposition to the IMF "structural adjustment" programs, although he has yet to propose viable alternative economic strategies. The economic and political elite fear that a Caldera triumph will mean a break with the traditional parties and their systems of patronage and corruption, representing a clear threat to their privileges.

With the fall of Perez, the rules of the political game in Venezuela have changed. It seems that those who are threatened with permanently losing power may choose the path of terrorist violence, a path of fear and of hate that might eventually lead to chaos and military dictatorship. The situation in Venezuela could therefore not be more delicate on its path to what the Venezuelan people would like to be a democracy without corruption and with fewer inequalities.

Conservation Continued from pg.3

The Untold Story

"Beginning tomorrow, you are not allowed to work the land anymore, and everybody here must leave the area in the next 24 hours." No, these are not the same words said by the army official to villagers from Los Haitises! However, they are quite similar. These were the words that a government officer said to a group of farmers in the Western border of Los Haitises forty years ago. Farmers used to live in the fertile plains of Sabán Grande de Boyá, knowing the difficult terrain and conditions of Los Haitises. But the dictator Rafael Trujillo decided to expand his sugar cane plantations and displaced thousands of farmers throughout the country. In 1951, he displaced farmers around Los Haitises, who then had few options other than to migrate to the cities or to Los Haitises. The story was repeated in the southern border of Los Haitises in the '70s when cattle ranchers displaced farmers in the plains of Bayaguana. Farmers from Los Haitises were not alone. Thousands of farmers have been

displaced throughout the country and the land used for cattle ranching, highways, dams, urban development, ore mining, tourism and conservation.

The consequences of the displacement of people from Los Haitises are quite striking. Peasants in Los Haitises are not allowed to work and the food that the government provides is scanty. In the words of one peasant, the food provided "is not enough to feed a family. We barely eat one meal with that." (5) If the government ever fulfills its promise of providing land and housing—which given previous cases, broken promises are the norm—the compensation that has been offered is far from being fair. Farmers have worked their land for 40 years, and have planted fruit trees and pasture and are living from the harvest of their produce. They cannot just leave and start all over again. As one farmer put it, "they are killing us slowly, they would do better throwing a bomb here and kill all of us at once." (6) Life will never be the same for these farmers.


Preservation of natural resources and protection of our environment are obviously important. However, for the peasants in the Dominican Republic, as well as for millions

of others around the world, conservation has resulted in the imposition of regulations and restrictions that have disrupted their lives. It seems that for people living in areas declared protected, conservation efforts are not different from various projects that have destroyed their communities in the name of development. The story is repeated in India, Indonesia, Brazil, Costa Rica and other countries. Conservation, mining, tourism, development, plantations and cattle ranches are established at the expenses of the rural poor. The displaced peasants are the ones who bear the real costs of those actions.

Economic development is seldom an equitable process and the gains for a few are often achieved at the expense of others, usually the poor. "This quandary of inequitable process also applies to conservation: with the establishment and management of national parks and other protected areas in developing countries also raises the question conservation for whom?" (7) Who benefits from the tourism that is going to be attracted, from the forest that is protected, from the wildlife that is being preserved, from the scientific research that will take place? Whose children are going to enjoy the beauty and usefulness of these natural resources? Will they be the children of the thousands of poor peasants who are being displaced in the Dominican Republic?

On the one hand, the Los Haitises National Park will be preserved for future generations, the tropical forest will be lush and exuberant again, and

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thousands of tourists will visit its caves and islands. The displaced farmers, on the other hand, will continue to struggle daily for survival. They will not have access to the natural resources for fuelwood, hunting or collecting water. They will not have access to the products that will be produced by chemical industries based on germplasm from the tropics. They will, indeed, suffer rather than benefit from these conservation efforts. For the displaced people, displacement for conservation is a more painful disaster than the ecological disaster the government wants to prevent.

Preservation of natural resources and the protection of our environment are important. However, it is imperative that conservationists and policy makers consider the differential effects of their actions. Given the inequalities of the socio-economic structure of the Dominican society, the benefits are accrued by a few, instead of by the majority. Within this context, we should ask who is going to benefit and how? Who bears the costs? We should ask conservation for whom?

Notes:

1 Quote from personal interview with farmers.

2 Plan de Uso y Gestion del Parque Nacional de Los Haitises y Areas Periféricas, 1991.

3 Wells and Brandon, 1992.

Parks and People, Liking Protected Areas Management with Local Communities. The World Bank, WWF and USAID. And Thrupp, Lori Ann, 1990. "Environmental Initiatives in Costa Rica: A Political Ecology Perspective", Society and Natural Resources, 3(243-256).

4 Rao and Geisler, 1990. The Social Consequences of Protected Areas Development for Resident Populations, Society and Natural Resources, 3(19-32). And West and Brechin, 1991. Resident Peoples and National Parks: Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation. Arizona Press, Boulder, CO.

5 Personal interviews.

6 Ibid.

7 West and Brechin, 1991.

Guatemala Cont. from pg. 7

overall system of Guatemala as a state. De León took several positive steps as a Human Rights Ombudsman, denouncing human rights crisis in the country. He criticized militarization and army control of the state. That made him a perfect candidate for president, because he had a good image at home and abroad.

As president, one of the first crisis in the de León confronted was a public clamor to give viability to the peace negotiations. That is the crisis that was really behind the May/June coups. De León took many steps to attempt to take the focus

off this issue. First, he stated that negotiations were "not a priority." Then he presented an alternative 180 Day Plan to make the war "irrelevant" by fixing roads, building clinics and other social investment projects that the government has no money to implement. By July, popular pressure forced him to present a peace plan, but what he presented was almost the same as the plan Ex-President Serrano Elías's presented to the UN.

Question: What do you base that evaluation on?

Answer: De León's plan, written by Dr. Héctor Rosada Granados, implicitly invalidates all of the previous agreements made in the negotiations process, including the ice-breaking accords signed in Oslo and Mexico. On the positive side, Dr. Rosada's peace plan would bring civilians into the negotiations by setting up a 'Permanent Peace Forum' to discuss substantive matters regarding Guatemalan society, but it has no timetable, and gives that forum no real decision making power. Issues of demobilization of the insurgency are to be discussed separately by the Army, the URNG and the government. The Conciliator, Monsignor Rodolfo Quezada Toruño, who has played a very positive, affirmative role in promoting the peace process, is also left out of the decisive sessions in this plan. The Multi-Sectoral Forum was quick to point out the problems with such an approach.

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Reviews

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and out-migration. Rather, the primary beneficiaries have been American corporations, which have reaped huge profits from their low-wage assembly plants, and the U.S. military, which has used the island as a staging ground for its Caribbean operations.

The authors also examine the popular movements which have emerged in recent years to promote greater social and economic justice in Puerto Rico. The generalized failure of traditional political institutions, they argue, has led to the formation of various labor, women's community and student groups. It is these groups, operating at the grassroots level, which hold the promise for a brighter future.

--Francis Adams

**Gathering Rage. The Failure of 20th Century
Revolutions to Develop a Feminist Agenda**
Margaret Randall
1992 Monthly Review Press

The failure to develop a feminist agenda was one of the elements that eroded the socialist experiments in Latin America. In turn, the inability or unwillingness to do this translated into a continuation of the patriarchal system already existing in those countries—Nicaragua and Cuba—as well as in the women's withdrawal from a process which they did not feel part of. Margaret Randall explores the reasons why socialism has not succeeded. Having lived in Cuba for ten years and in Nicaragua for four years, she shares with us her experiences of living socialism and of being a woman in those countries during those years.

This is a book about the theory and practice of socialist/feminist agendas. Even within a socialist structure, the prevailing patriarchal system in Nicaragua and Cuba prevented the creation of a feminist agenda. Randall's discussion of patriarchy explains the why; however, she is also interested in the how. She argues that this is explained by a process through which women do not question the prevailing way of thinking and, thus, internalize our oppression. In order to explore this process, she points to the "hidden links between the personal and the political" and proposes to "develop a discourse that centers us in our lives and in the world". The mechanisms to achieve this goal will be feminist theory, therapy and practice.

Feminist therapy contributes to the shaping of new knowledge because it brings memory and history to understand ourselves and allows us to question patriarchy. Women's empowerment will emerge "from a fully developed sense of self, possibly only when both individual and collective memory is retrieved." Randall remembers that in the socialist experiments, "the new ideas and methodologies in feminist therapy" were considered "bourgeois luxuries" instead of liberating forces for women to understand ourselves. Finally, she concludes that the inclusion of feminist therapy and the understanding of culture, spirituality, and sexuality, will truly effect a structural change in any political system.

Bringing a feminist point of view into the discussion of the social agenda has great merit, and this may override some of my criticisms of Randall's work. Although Randall is aware of the role of the United States in preventing a free and healthy development of socialism in Cuba and Nicaragua, she does not focus on how this oppression prevented those countries from developing their own agendas. In the same way that men under any system are

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unwilling to relinquish their privilege, and the power that comes with it, the United States refuses to give up its privilege in Latin America. Feminist theory and therapy are clearly indispensable ways to approach the creation of a feminist/socialist agenda. I am convinced that these feminist ideas have advanced the awareness of women in the United States. However, for feminist theory and therapy to advance knowledge in other countries it must be developed in light of the experience of women and men in those countries. The sense of self that arises in people from countries and cultures other than the United States must come from collective and individual memories seen with their own eyes. The struggle to do this can be advanced by considering the perspective of committed socialist feminists like Margaret Randall.

--Teresa Vázquez

A Forbidden Passion

Cristina Peri Rossi

1993 Cleis Press

Reading Cristina Peri Rossi, one is transported back into mythical realms, a land of stories and story telling that is sadly lost in our every day reality. In this latest book of her short stories Peri Rossi guides us gently into worlds of dreams, of long and strange voyages, of childhood passions, and of an adult world made strange. She achieves a powerful voice, full of irony and parable, without great complications, by describing with simplicity the absurdities that she collects and transforms from everyday life. Ultimately, the reader is left with a vibrant sense of love, an unbounded feeling that pours out of each of her stories, almost imperceptibly, but with a strength that gives one a great passion for life.

--Andrés Román

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BASQUE

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(literature, films) and communication (newspaper, television, radio). There are also the alternative Basque schools or Ikastolas (illegal primary school established during the last years of the dictatorship). It is important to understand that this cultural renaissance is more due to the efforts and achievements of the grassroots social movements than the result of a deliberate policy.

At the present time however, Euskera is spoken by only 25 to 30 percent of the population and its future is still not guaranteed. It is possible to explain this low percentage of Euskera speakers by the cultural repression and by the fact that Euskal Herria has been a major area of settlement for Spanish immigrants. (Currently, their population is over 25% of the total area.) Only a few of these new residents of Euskal Herria have tried to learn Euskera or accept any aspects of the culture.

Another main characteristic of the Basque is their strong history of resistance: The Basques have long struggled against outside oppressors (Romans, Visgoths, Moors, Spanish, French) to maintain their cultural identity. This is symbolized by their language and their egalitarian and libertarian spirits, expressed by the historically democratic local governments.

Today, a central feature of Basque life is nationalism and political and cultural consciousness. The foremost Basque political parties are the conservative Basque Nationalist

Party, which demands greater autonomy from Spain and Herri Batasuna, the political party of the Basque liberation movement, which means 'Popular Unity.'

Another expression of the ongoing and complex struggle for freedom and cultural sovereignty is ETA (in Euskera, the acronym of 'Basque homeland and freedom'). ETA was set up in the late fifties to combat political and cultural repression under

... there are more than 600 Basque political prisoners in prisons throughout Spain whose rights are constantly violated...

Franco's dictatorship. A degree of sympathy among the European countries and within Spain for a people who fought fascism accompanied the flourishing of the movement. ETA directed its attacks at Spanish government leaders, military and police forces. Later ETA expanded its actions into the reversal of social problems—for instance, an opposition of drug trafficking and ecological destruction.

When Franco died in 1975, ending thirty-six years of dictatorship, the Basque population hoped that they would finally be allowed independence. Although their language and some cultural traditions were reinstated, the majority of the population did not approve the new Spanish

constitution. It did not recognize the right to self-determination or guarantee the survival of the Basque culture. As a result, the struggle for independence continued. In 1979 three Basque provinces (Biskaia, Araba and Gipuzkoa) formed a semi-autonomous regional government. Nafarroa was separated into another semi-autonomous state, while still under the control of the Spanish government. There are also a quarter of a million Basques living under the French government who do not have any regional recognition.

ETA continues to carry out dozens of actions a year, mainly against the Spanish police (National Police and Guardia Civil) and military forces, sometimes causing civilian victims.

At the same time, there are more than 600 Basque political prisoners in prisons throughout Spain, where the fundamental rights of prisoners are constantly violated. Amnesty International has reported cases of torture. Several ETA personnel have died in detention; others have been targets of GAL (a para-military force made of mercenaries, soldiers and police and presumably linked with the Spanish government). Among other civilians, a parliamentarian from Herri Batasuna was murdered on route to Madrid for his swearing-in. The swearing-in is the only occasion when any of Herri

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Basque

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Batasuna's MPs will attend the Spanish parliament. At the end of 1993, 25 years after the death of the first ETA activist and the first Spanish policeman in confrontation, the nation is still held in the grip of violence.

The majority of the Basque people are looking for peace in the life of Euskal Herria and a future for them in the world. But as long as the causes of the conflict remain (no recognition of their right of self-determination,

no democratic means for their political goals, no means to guarantee the survival of their culture, the violence will continue to be part of daily life. Even if ETA laid down its arms, another guerilla movement would likely emerge to take its place.

The Basque people realize that independence is not the only way to peace. But they believe that it is necessary to have a dialogue between the two parties of the conflict in order to promote peace and justice in the country. The Spanish response is almost always stepped-up police

repression.

Now that Europe is being reorganized, the Basques want to cooperate freely with other minority peoples and cultures of Europe. Ultimately, we hope to build a community of 'workers and countries' in Europe which stands in solidarity with and will welcome other peoples of the world. The Basque do not want to be forced to part of a Europe of 'corporations and states' that silences and the many voices and colors within Europe and closes down the borders around its fortress.

NAFTA

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and by relocating, they avoid providing worker benefits and protection and they neglect their environmental responsibilities. Agri-business also benefits from this relocation since they'll be able to use pesticides forbidden in the US.

Labor standards have been among the main concerns in the NAFTA negotiations. It's true that NAFTA doesn't consider the social impacts it will provoke. Free trade critics declare that Mexico has weaker labor regulations than the

United States and Canada and that the migration of industries to Mexico will reduce their current labor standards and protection. In fact, Mexican legislation is one of the most progressive legislations in Latin America; what is unexistent is the enforcement of all the wonderful regulations that the Mexican Constitution has. Therefore, we observe that in practice, workers' strikes have been continuously declared illegal; independent unions have been repressed; peasants have been murdered and disappeared; and discrimination of all sorts is common in job settings. In many

cases, workers who are eligible to receive benefits are so overworked and their health so deteriorated that most of them die before or soon after gaining those benefits--which in many occasions are meager. This situation stems from the lack of health protection and labor standards required by law. The retirement system is not updated and does not provide enough benefits for retirees to survive. In addition, although childcare exists, its services are so minimal that only a few families in urban areas have access to them. Women still face rampant job discrimination if they are married, get married or get pregnant.

Currently, based on arguments of productivity, competitiveness and free markets, national and international corporations are pushing to eliminate health insurance coverage and social



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Question: What else keeps the plan from being implemented?

Answer: The main problem with the plan is that no sector of society, with the exception of the government, has accepted it. It was even rejected by the business sector, as represented by the Chamber of Commerce, CACIF.

Question: When we were recently in Guatemala, we became aware of continued U.S. military presence there. We were distressed to receive reports that the U.S. troops were coming into the country with two sets of equipment, uniforms and weaponry per soldier, and then leaving one behind. Do you foresee increased U.S. military involvement in Guatemala?

Answer: Such involvement has been present over the past thirty odd years, but it goes through different stages and takes on different forms. For several years now, Washington has been moving in accordance with a plan of establishing formal democracies and pacifying Latin America, with the aim of reducing the size of the Latin America military and creating stability and economic integration. Such a climate is needed for Latin America to serve U.S. economic interests in competing with the European Common Market and the Pacific Basin countries. Washington's encouragement of the Salvadoran Peace Process was one manifestation of this plan. The North American Free Trade Agreement is another. But the plan has backfired in several

cases: In Peru, in Haiti, in the renewed conflict in Nicaragua, in the continued crisis in El Salvador, to name a few. The recent coup phenomenon in Guatemala was another manifestation of the crisis being faced in the continent with the so-called "formal democracies." These policies, often termed 'neoliberalism' are reflected, for instance, in the geometric growth of the maquiladora industry in Guatemala, and in the fact that the economic integration of Central America was point number seven in De León's 180 Day Plan. Later, the five Central American presidents also made historic formal joint presentation for Central American Independence Day, September 15, simultaneously broadcast by all of the Central America's television channels, emphasizing the need for Central American unity and integration. Complications, in the specific case of Guatemala, are the immense power of the Guatemalan Army as an economic, political and social institution, coupled with the fact that on a military operations, albeit under the cover of military exercises, medical expeditions and things of the sort. This state of affairs is not limited to Guatemala. The Marines are also increasing their involvement in the neighboring El Salvador, and will be there during the critical upcoming elections. It is my personal opinion that the military participation of the U.S. in the Guatemalan conflict will increase to the extent that attempts to divert the search for adequate solutions to nation's problems are made.

Question: Why, as we also noticed, is the debate over Belize being resumed, with a call to void Ex-President Serrano's recognition of Belize as a sovereign nation?

Answer: Whenever there is a crisis in Guatemala to which the government has no short term solution, the debate over Belize is renewed. It has become commonplace to see public attention diverted from fundamental problems in such a way. When Belize's recognition began to be questioned this time, it came at a moment when the public was clamoring for the Ex-President and Ex-Minister of the Interior to be extradited and for the state to be rid of unethical officials. In trying to incite rejection of Serrano's recognition of Belize, an attempt is being made to bring the popular sectors into a reactionary campaign. This would hurt the interests of the popular sectors, and result in serious condemnation of the Guatemalan government by the international community, not to mention the threat it poses to the Belizeans. It is also worth remembering that Serrano's recognition of Belize was made in exchange for a relinquishment of Belizean water rights on the Atlantic seaboard. Many Belizeans felt those terms to be unjust; some even called it a form of political blackmail.

All peoples, on principle, have the right to self-determination. Considering the Guatemalan military's genocidal nature, it is unimaginable that the people of Belize would submit themselves to such an authority

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voluntarily. For that reason, the interests of democracy, human and civil rights, and of the popular sectors of course coincide with recognition of Belizian sovereignty. We should be clear on this issue.

Question: As you mentioned, public clamor has opened up serious discussions regarding "purification" of the Congress and the Supreme Court in Guatemala. Can you give us an example of the corruption that has led to this outcry? Where do you think these discussions will lead?

Answer: This is a necessary process, given the blatant corruption of these bodies, which reaches alarming proportions. Some examples are the exorbitant confidential slush funds or the purchase of "Sicorsky helicopters for more than twice their worth. The corruption, it should be noted, however, is systematic. It takes an entire system to have allowed Ex-President Serrano to come into office with his house mortgaged and have left a year and a half later with 93 million quetzales (\$16 million) on deposit in Guatemalan banks and more than 100 properties: race horses, real estate, cars, in Guatemala, apart from his possessions abroad. De León's steps to dismiss members of Congress and the Supreme Court have been inconsistent. At one point he even characterized his own actions as probably unconstitutional. In large measure, this popular demand is

merely being used as a smoke-screen to avoid purifying the army, which is the institution linked in government most in need of purification, an institution linked to control of

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security benefits from the Mexican Labor Law. The Mexican authorities think that American health insurance companies can undertake the function of providing better medical insurance for Mexicans. They forget however, to mention that only wealthy Mexicans will benefit from privatized medical insurance. This year, the labor law in México will be modified. Again, no worker input is considered in these negotiations since most decisions are made "top-down". In one of the conference board bulletins, Jorge Regil --one of the Mexican lawyers working in the negotiation of the agreement--declared: "Both the federal labor authorities and the major federations of unions understand the realities of the new global economy. Most likely, some of the socialist-based labor standards will be changed in the near future to align Mexico with other markets." As we can observe, labor organizers rightly affirm that labor standards and regulations will be considered under the free trade paradigm as unfair practices and eventually could be eliminated.

The NAFTA document is not preoccupied with labor standards. It is more concerned with the elimination of barriers

to trade and the creation of favorable conditions for investment. Of the few labor standards it addresses, it does not include enforcement mechanisms of workplace safety laws in either urban or rural areas. This poses the question of which institutions are going to uphold those standards and how they are going to be financed because as far as I'm concerned, the Mexicans in urban and rural areas who are most affected by deregulation policies and privatization also want to have or keep having medical insurance and maternity leave; they want to live and work in non-hazardous environments; they want to have access to jobs, and the right to organize and bargain collectively; they want to have access to education and a better quality of life. They want all these rights the same as the people in the United States and Canada. I am sure Mexican workers consider these as basic human rights, the same as people in Canada and the US consider them. Therefore, I advocate for a FTA that should consider not only the needs of corporations and capital, but the needs of those who will produce more capital for those corporations. Labor and environmental standards in any equitable trade agreement must be included along with compensatory payment and legalization of labor flows. NAFTA is going to set a precedent in free trade in Latin America, which is all the more reason it needs to address those concerns. If everybody is talking about global economy, global investment, global capital, and global regulation, there is no way to ignore global human rights. Thank You.



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