(in) activism today...

On October 24th, some 10 million Colombians around the country marched for peace, accompanied by activists worldwide. In Puerto Rico, nationalist demonstrations regularly draw crowds of 50,000-100,000. Solidarity action in Ithaca even on local issues might draw 50 people, if we're lucky.

In our own communities, it's difficult to draw a crowd for anything more political than a Bob Dylan concert. Society is numbed by the excesses of globalization and frightening media perspectives on world issues, and while most people want to care, few can find the time to act.

In this fast-paced world, real social issues of structural inequality, environmental devastation, and the sustained presence of the U.S. military in Latin America draw the back burner in our lives. Part of the problem is our sound-bite culture, which demands fast and easy solutions to complicated problems. Today's problems can't be explained—or solved—with a sound bite.

This issue of the CUSLAR Newsletter explores the continued U.S. military presence in Latin America. Two primary issues have replaced the threat of Communism as the rallying cry behind U.S. military installations throughout the hemisphere—counter-narcotics action and the protection of free trade and global market expansion.

These issues converge around themes of global monopoly on trade and the homogenization of a world belief system. Our trade, our system, and our military weapons and techniques are being pushed down the throats of local communities throughout Latin America—and the rest of the world, for that matter.

Action is possible. It does work—in numbers. I invite each reader to combat apathy by investigating the local possibilities for a world characterized by social justice, not war.

The Committee on U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR) is a Cornell University based group, founded in 1965, which seeks to promote a greater understanding of Latin America and the Caribbean. The members of CUSLAR are a diverse group of people united in our concern about the role of the U.S. in the social, political, and economic affairs of the region. Within this context we support the right of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean to self-determination, and support their efforts to free themselves from a legacy of colonialism, exploitation, and oppression. CUSLAR works for peace, justice, and greater mutual understanding in U.S./Latin American relations through education, solidarity, and support of human rights.

If you are interested in writing or editing for the newsletter, please call the CUSLAR office at (607) 255-7293. Articles and letters to the editor should be sent to: CUSLAR, 316 Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, or via Email at cuslar@cornell.edu. The CUSLAR Newsletter is published three times a year. The CUSLAR Newsletter is funded by the SAFC of Cornell University. The content does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the SAFC or Cornell University. CUSLAR is a project of CRESP.
In Brief...

By Sam Costello

As Peru rejects ruling, prison fast continues

After announcing Peru's desire to withdraw from the Inter-American Human Rights Court (CIDH) on Sept. 28, the CIDH announced that it would continue on with its open cases against Alberto Fujimori’s government. Peru attempted to withdraw from the court after CIDH ordered that it grant new trials to four Chilenas serving prison sentences in Peru for work with the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Fujimori responded that the CIDH was “seeking to free terrorists.”

Meanwhile, several imprisoned MRTA members began the second week of a hunger strike aimed at improving prison conditions. Three MRTA leaders began the strike on Sept. 21, and were joined by 50 more prisoners by Sept. 28. (Clarín, La República)

Chilean journalist finds asylum in U.S.

Chilean journalist Alejandra Matus was granted asylum in the United States by the INS on Sept. 30. Matus sought U.S. protection after an arrest warrant was issued in response to her authorship of a book critical of the Chilean justice system. Her work, The Black Book of Chilean Justice, has been banned and its publishing editor and general manager have been arrested on charges of violating state security law. Matus is the first Chilean to receive U.S. asylum since military rule was ended there in 1990. (CNN, El Nuevo Herald)

Opposition alliance collapses in Mexico

A strong victory in the Mexican state of Coahuila by the ruling PRI has led to the fracturing of an opposition coalition made up of the PRD, PAN and six other smaller parties. The PAN and PRD, the two major parties, split on the means by which the coalition’s presidential candidate would be chosen. The PAN preferred a solution based on opinion polls, while the PRD pushed for a primary. An advisory group was unable to reach a compromise.

This failure was particularly disappointing as a Sept. 27 telephone poll showed that 63 percent of the populace of Mexico City supported the idea of a coalition against the PRI. (Financial Times, WSI, LJ)
Protests continue in Vieques

The pamphlets handed out to protestors camped out at the U.S. Navy base at Vieques, Puerto Rico, read, "You are on an area of exclusive federal jurisdiction and in direct violation of a permanent injunction issued in 1979 which specifically prohibits anyone from unlawfully entering all federal lands located in the island of Vieques." The governor of Puerto Rico, Pedro Rossello, said that the arrest of the protestors would be "imprudent" and "cause a difficult situation." He added, "There should be no intervention with the people camped out in Vieques." Rossello also supports the drive to remove the U.S. Navy from the island and said that the Puerto Rican Justice Department would sue the U.S. Navy if it resumes bombing in Vieques. (El Diario, La Prensa)

See related article on page 28

Mass indigenous suicide in Brazil

In early September, a group of five Guarani Kaiowa youths drank a poisonous mix of insecticide and rum in the village of Panambizinho, Mato Grosso do Sul. An indigenous affairs representative for the government said that the suicides were the result of long-delayed resolutions in indigenous land disputes between the natives and local colonists. The colonists, who have hired gunmen to patrol their colonized area, have also used an electric fence to contain the Kaiowa into just a 60 hectare wide area. (LP)

Venezuelan judges suspended

On October 8, more than 100 Venezuelan judges were suspended by the organization overseeing the overhaul of Venezuela's judicial system. The move was called "a precautionary measure to protect the judicial system" by Rene Molina, the Supreme Court's inspector general. Molina said that all of the suspended judges had received more than seven complaints filed against them. Molina also said that the judges will be reinstated if, upon investigation, the charges are unfounded.

This suspension comes after the firing of eight and the suspension of 48 judges in September.

Venezuela has been in a state of upheaval since the election of former coup leader and leftist reformer, President Hugo Chavez, last year. (LP)

Illegal abortions killed over 2,000 in Peru in 1998

More than 2,000 women died as a result of illegal abortions in Peru in 1998, according to official estimates. Over 250,000 women underwent abortions last year in Peru, where the procedure is illegal. Official profiles of these women find them to be between 19- and 35-years-old and that they seek abortions due to unstable relationships, unemployment, poor education, or to maintain...
family size (which is often already large). Dr. Eduardo Maradiegue of the Health Ministry’s prenatal program called for more sex education and a wider distribution of contraceptives.

Honduran police attack anti-Columbus protesters

A peaceful Oct. 12 protest in Tegucigalpa was disrupted by Honduran police using tear gas, clubs, and guns. Between 5,000 and 10,000 people, mostly indigenous and black, had gathered to protest the anniversary of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas.

The marchers also put forth a number of demands, including that article 107 of the Honduran constitution be repealed. This article allows foreigners to purchase land on the Honduran coast, which the activists assert leads to the displacement of many poor residents in these coastal areas. In addition, they demanded justice in the murder of 45 indigenous leaders, and improved economic and social conditions for the poor.

The police had blocked passage of the march in front of the presidential palace which led to the violence. After much negotiation, rocks were thrown at the police, who responded with tear gas made, according to one observer, by a U.S. company based in Pennsylvania.

The Honduran congress has since decided not to ratify the changes to the constitution that the marchers objected to.

PVH union defeated in Guatemala

It has recently become clear, with stark finality, that the union voted in at a Guatemalan Phillips Van Huesen (PVH) factory, alleged to be a sweatshop, has been broken. The seven year struggle, in which 300 workers took part, had resulted in the only unionized factory in Guatemala. The plant, however,

Mexican environmentalists protest gene-altered corn

Mexican environmentalists have begun a campaign to end the import of genetically-altered corn into Mexico from the United States. Much of the corn imported into Mexico hails from the U.S. midwest, where the use of the Bt gene, a natural pesticide producer, is prevalent.

The environmental groups assert that the genetically altered corn could cross-pollinate with Mexican varieties, thus endangering the survival of over 300 types of Mexican corn. The groups also say that the modified corn has developed a resistance to traditional herbicides. Such a resistance could lead to the use of even stronger herbicides, thus endangering Mexican biodiversity.
was abruptly shut down after the union was voted in.

The plant's workers had held a seven month vigil in front of the factory in an attempt to pressure PVH to reopen its doors. PVH recently sold the factory to another company, which, after raising hopes, has since said that it will not recognize the union.

STITCH, the American solidarity group who aided the union drive called this "a very serious defeat. Once again there are no union contracts in the entire Guatemalan maquila sector. Nevertheless, the courageous women who fought so hard and so long to keep their union have still made a lasting contribution to organizing in Central America sweatshops."

World Bank, IMF, IDB call for change in neoliberal focus

In the face of rising poverty and inequality, international financial organizations like the World Bank, IMF and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), have announced that the strict neo-stimulating growth. But increased poverty has proved their theory false.

Ithaca rallies around debt relief

On September 25, a coalition of Ithaca activists including members of

liberal economic model should be changed. Calling for reconsidering the role of the state and application of income redistribution policies, the new model considers protecting the interests of large international investors.

"What market are we talking about if more than one-third of Latin Americans are excluded because of poverty?" asked Mexican economist Diana Alarcon, of the IDB.

Until the beginning of this year, neoliberal technocrats argued that increased concentration of wealth would lead to greater savings in a small sector of society,

CUSLAR, Ithaca Catholic Charities, and CRESPI joined together to demand debt relief for the world's poorest nations, in solidarity with similar actions world-wide. An afternoon of education followed a march to the Ithaca Commons.

Some of Ithaca's youngest activists joined in the protest against the "war against the poor," in which over 14,000 children 5 years old and younger die every day.

President Clinton has subsequently requested $970 million towards the relief of bi-lateral debt owed to the United States government by severely indebted countries.

Local Ithacans rally for debt relief on the Ithaca Commons on September 25 as part of the Jubilee 2000 campaign.
On Sept. 21, Colombian officials told New York Times reporter Tim Golden that they seek aid from the United States "well above the $1.5 billion Clinton administration officials cited... [for] providing Colombia over the next three years." U.S. drug czar Barry McCaffrey wants to double aid to Colombia, which is already the third largest recipient of U.S. military foreign aid, after Israel and Egypt. And the proposed $1.635 billion Alianza Act of 1999, introduced in the U.S. Senate on Oct. 20, would provide millions of dollars to the Colombian military for training and equipping new "counterdrug" battalions.

Senator Mike DeWine (R-Ohio), co-sponsor of the Alianza Act, suggests that without the U.S. aid package, "one of the largest export markets in the Western Hemisphere government will...falter, and...democratic government will further erode." 2

US ideas of export markets, counter-narcotic operations, and "democratic stability" have questionable meaning in an exclusionary society where 70% of the wealth is controlled by less than 1/3 of the population and alternative political movements are not tolerated.

Colombia faces many of the same intractable problems as other Latin American countries. Income distribution is wildly unequal, poverty levels are high and wages are low: 70% of arable land is controlled by only 3% of the population in this primarily agricultural country; nearly 50% of Colombians live below the poverty line; and the wages of 60% of the employed fail to purchase basic nutritional and health materials. Daily, 1,000 people line up in front of the U.S. Embassy in an attempt to flee their homeland!

In addition to widespread economic problems, the Colombian government has been embroiled in civil war with the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) for over 30 years. In that time, a panoply of rightist paramilitaries has arisen, responsible for numerous human rights violations. The well-publicized drug cartel turmoil of the past ten years, in which various cartels struggled for dominance and a larger share of drug profits, has contributed to commonplace violence, kidnappings and murder.

The Colombian people are without recourse, in light of the essential corruption of the Colombian military and police forces. Colombian
security forces are permeated with paramilitary collaborators, who are responsible for over 70% of all human rights violations in Colombia and are often lead drug traffickers. Massacres on the government's will for peace."6

This chaos has forced drastic responses upon the rural populace of Colombia. Contrary to popular opinion in the U.S., Colombian

"Colombian peasants growing coca are the result of social, political, and economic problems that cannot and will not be solved by military means."

—Cecilia Zarate (7).

perpetrated by rightist paramilitaries have occurred with the tacit, and occasionally overt, support of the national police. The army is no better. After a human rights amendment blocked the distribution of U.S. funds to battalions known to be human rights violators, only one regular military unit continued to qualify for such aid.4

Both the Colombian people and the FARC doubt the legitimacy of President Andres Pastrana's regime. CNN recently reported that opinion polls show that "most ordinary Colombians believe Pastrana [is] mishandling the peace process and doubt talks will encourage the FARC to end its radical demands for a socialist regime." The FARC also doubts the government's commitment to the peace process and is suspicious of U.S. involvement: "The alliance between Pastrana and the United States to step up the war against the FARC, under the pretext of fighting drug trafficking, casts doubt peasants grow coca, the base plant which is processed to create cocaine, out of economic and personal necessity. Because so much of the land is controlled by so few people, very few small farmers own their own land, and find it difficult to profit from the land they do work. Coca is called "the blessed plant" in Colombia, because, as one rural farmer put it, "it is the only one which gives us enough to live on."8

"Narco-guerrillas"?

It is also a cherished perception in the U.S. that the FARC is solely a drug cultivation and distribution organization. This could not be further from the truth. Though "there is no doubt that Colombia's leftist guerrillas... are deeply involved in the drug trade," the FARC has also been fighting a civil war of "liberation" for years. The FARC relies on revenue from drugs sales and cultivation "taxes" to fund its organizational activities, but it is not alone. Though Barry McCaffrey and the U.S. media repeatedly refer to the FARC as "narco-guerrillas," London's Economist has stated that "the right-wing paramilitary groups and the traffickers they protect are far deeper into drugs—and the DEA knows it."

This linguistic obfuscation has led to the nearly unbreakable linkage of the FARC to drugs. This link, and the attendant blurring of the line between the guerrillas and the cartels, has troubling implications. If the guerrillas are only "narco-guerrillas," then what is to stop U.S. counter-narcotic aid sent to Colombia from being used to fight the guerrillas? If this happens, then the United States will have embroiled itself even further in an already chaotic civil conflict; and rather than fighting drugs in Colombia, the U.S., most likely, will have started fighting the Colombian people.

The United States may not be alone in its wish to get involved in the Colombian war. After a recent visit to Latin America by Barry McCaffrey, a report surfaced at a Venezuelan television station, allegedly leaked to them by an official in the Venezuelan military, that details a U.S. plan taking steps to involve Peru, Ecuador and Brazil, as well as the United States in the Colombian conflict. The plan would proceed as follows: Colombian President Andres Pastrana would try to reach an agreement with
FARC. If this fails by January 2000, he would declare a state of internal war in Colombia and call for regional intervention from Peru, Ecuador and Brazil. This force would join with five Colombian battalions currently in training under U.S. advisors, while U.S. warships off Colombia’s coasts would support the intervention with missile attacks and air strikes.13

In such a military action, it would be extremely difficult to distinguish between a war on drugs and a war on the FARC, especially given the interconnectedness of the two. It is hard to imagine the need for the armies of four countries, missiles and air strikes to fight drug traffickers. Rather, this force seems designed to fight an army of nearly 20,000 well-trained soldiers, the FARC.

Military intervention is not the only option for combating the international drug trade. The DEA has stated that drug manufacture is an extremely 'complicated' process, requiring 'sophisticated equipment and skills,' as well as 'expensive chemicals' like potassium permanganate, ether and acetone 'that are harder to find and often not manufactured in the processing country.'14 Not surprisingly, many of these processing chemicals are manufactured in the United States and sold by U.S. companies to drug processing countries. If the United States cracked down on these companies, perhaps by banning export of these chemicals to known drug producers, then processing costs would rise and the supply of drugs decline.

It has also been suggested by Human Rights News that "the U.S. should also consider devoting funds to an in-depth investigation of the major multinational banks and companies involved in laundering billions of dollars in drug revenues."15 Cleaning out shelters for dirty money would facilitate the identification of drug traffickers, seize their funds, and help end the legitimate operations...
they use to launder their money. Certainly, this would deal a major blow to drug operations worldwide.

We've seen this before. More times than we'd like to admit, in fact. Vietnam. El Salvador, Nicaragua. More recently, Iraq, Haiti, Kosovo, Somalia. We've seen the United States government move from aid and diplomatic support to full-fledged involvement in internal conflicts. We've seen billions of U.S. tax dollars flow into troubled regions, buying nothing but more trouble. But we do have a choice, a say in this; this is not a foregone conclusion. We, as citizens of States to stay out of other countries' domestic affairs; that we want a reasonable drug policy. We must make this clear, because if we do not, we may find ourselves at war once again.

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...most U.S. aid has been diverted to Bogota's counterinsurgency war against leftist guerrillas.
Colombia's gringo invasion

by Frank Smyth and Winifred Tate; reprinted from: Covert Action Quarterly, Spring, 1997; Pages 46-49.

The US military boasts that its Army Special Forces or "Green Berets" are "the most versatile special operations soldiers in the world." While serving under the Department of Defense (DoD), members of these units, trained in unconventional warfare, psychological operations and other skills, sometimes work on temporary "attachment" to the CIA's Directorate of Operations.

In the 1990s, Green Berets and other US advisers have been deeply involved in Colombia, even though it has the worst ongoing human rights record in Latin America. Last year, at least 231 US military and intelligence advisers were sent there, according to the DoD's official deployment schedules. These include two teams with 52 US Green Beret advisers each to train the Colombian Army in "junior leadership" combat skills. That official count is only three fewer than the congressionally-imposed limit (often violated) on the number of in-country US advisers deployed in El Salvador during the peak of its war.

Even more Green Beret advisers have trained Colombian Army Special Forces units outside Colombia at US bases in Panama. According to US officials involved, this particular training has taken place under the auspices of the CIA as part of a "Top Secret" counter-drug program.

Since 1989, all US military training, advice, arms and services to Colombia have been officially earmarked for the drug war... But most US aid has been diverted to Bogota's counterinsurgency war against leftist guerrillas. Since the 1960s, the Colombian military, with US backing, has been fighting the formerly pro-Moscow Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the pro-Cuba National Liberation Army (ELN), as well as other groups. In recent years, the conflict has heated up, with Amnesty International reporting more than 20,000 dead since 1986. While all sides have committed abuses, the military and allied (though illegal) rightist paramilitary groups are guilty of the vast majority.

Spooks bearing gifts

Human rights monitors have long accused Washington of complicity in these crimes. Now they have proof. Last October, Amnesty International released internal US military documents showing that the US had provided arms to 13 of 14 Colombian army units that Amnesty had cited for abuses.

In November, Human Rights Watch released US and
Colombian military documents, along with oral testimony, showing that in 1991, both the CIA and DoD advised Colombia before its Defense Ministry established 41 clandestine intelligence networks. According to a classified (reservado) ministry order creating the program, the networks' only function was to target "the armed subversion," i.e., leftist guerrillas and their suspected supporters. Four former members of one network, based in the riverport town of Barrancabermeja, testified that it incorporated illegal paramilitary groups and was responsible for killing hundreds of civilians.

The CIA was directly involved in helping design and fund the intelligence networks, according to retired US Army Col. James S. Roach, Jr., then military attache and Defense Department Intelligence Agency liaison in Bogota. "The CIA set up the clandestine nets on their own," Roach says. "They had a lot of money. It was kind of like Santa Claus had arrived." CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield declined to comment.

These CIA-promoted intelligence networks enabled the Colombian military and illegal paramilitaries to expand the pattern of secret collaboration which began in the early 1980s. According to Javier Giraldo, a Jesuit priest and founder of Colombia's Inter-Congregational Commission for Justice and Peace: "A vast network of armed civilians began to replace, at least in part, soldiers and policemen who could be easily identified. They also started to employ methods that had been carefully designed to ensure secrecy and generate confusion. Because of this, witnesses and victims of crimes are unsure of the exact identity of the individual(s) responsible for committing and provided tactical advice to units based out of ports including Barrancabermeja. Meanwhile, US Green Berets train the Colombian army in Cimitarra, a town that even Colombian police reports identify as a center of illegal paramilitary operations. Other US officials work closely with Colombia.

U.S. Green Berets train the Colombian army in Cimitarra, a town that even Colombian police reports identify as a center of illegal paramilitary operations.

them. This problem with identifying the perpetrators is often insurmountable.

At the same time, members of the army and police began to conceal their identities, frequently wearing civilian clothes and hoods, to drive unmarked cars and to take their victims to clandestine torture centers, all in order to forego legal formalities in arrest. What has frequently followed these abductions is intimidation or torture, enforced disappearances and murder.

While DoD officials continue to deny complicity in human rights violations, the close ties between US intelligence and defense agencies and their Colombian counterparts are well documented. Last year, for example, the US Navy deployed 97 operations and intelligence advisers in-country. There they helped plan strategy with the Colombian Navy command top commanders. The US Military Advisory Group's office is inside the Colombian Armed Forces command compound, conveniently down the hall from the offices of the Colombian army commander.

There is also good documentation of abuses by the Colombian Navy, which has also been armed, trained, and advised by the United States. The US helped design its Riverine units to patrol rivers in search of trafficking boats. One of the ports the Riverines are based in is Barrancabermeja, also the site of one of the 41 intelligence networks promoted by the CIA. Four ex-agents of this network have testified about it. In a pattern used around the country, naval intelligence wanted to keep the network covert, so it incorporated retired military officers and other civilians to both gather intelligence and execute operations. One such clandestine operative was ex-
naval Sgt. Saulo Segura. He reported to Capt. Juan Carlos Alvarez, the network chief who served under Lt. Col. Rodrigo Quinonez, then the Navy’s top intelligence commander. Together these men identified targets for surveillance and decided which ones to hit.

One ex-agent testified: [Lt.] Col. Rodrigo Quinonez was told everything about the surveillance operations. And according to what was discovered, he would speak with Capt. Juan Carlos Alvarez, alias El Ingeniero (“The Engineer”), giving the green light if the operation was OK or not, in other words, to kill people or not.

After that, Capt. Juan Carlos Alvarez would communicate directly with [his team leaders], who told him what to do. If it was by phone, they used the following codes: "There are some broken motors. I need you to repair them. They are in such and such a place." And they would give the address. "Take good mechanics and good tools." Mechanics meant sicarios [hired assassins], good tools meant good arms, and the motors meant the victims.

According to the testimony of four ex-agents, early victims included the president, vice-president, and treasurer of the local transportation workers union; two leaders of the local oil workers union (another one of its leaders was killed last October); one leader of a local peasant workers' union; and two human rights monitors.

The US bears complicity in Colombia’s human rights record, having armed, trained and advised most of the military units and commands directly implicated in the killing. Still, the Clinton administration is now increasing aid to the Colombian military. "While trying to avoid the appearance of complicity in human rights violations, the United States has continued to provide training and material to the Colombian military irrespective of its horrendous abuses."
Redefining Mayan Identity
An Interview with Alvaro Pop

CUSLAR: Can you describe the experiences you had growing up in a Mayan community that led you to your current work for democracy and indigenous rights?

Alvaro Pop: I believe the most important experiences of my life come from having accompanied my grandfather when I was very young. He was responsible for a cofradía, a communal Catholic organization which held large celebrations every year. These involved a process of communal organizing which included discussions, communal management of funds, and organizing a week-long series of events. This was not just religious work, but also involved efforts to help the rest of the community. I think these were determining experiences in my life. I learned a lot from participating in these collective endeavors, about finding ways to share hardships so as to move towards common objectives. This was important in my later search to continue in this kind of work with organizations in the struggle for broader participation. And from my grandfather's insistence that we are all equal. That is, through this education, which my father later formalized, I learned that we, the "have-nots," must be able to share the same space and situation with the "haves."

Is this communal experience typical of indigenous life in Guatemala?

I was lucky in having certain experiences, but there are typical things about all communal life in Guatemala. Maya life in Guatemala is fundamentally communal, which is what has enabled the culture to survive. The fact of having been so isolated has also furthered its survival. But I think it is important to recognize that even those Maya who live in more populated regions, or who share their environment with other cultural groups, have maintained their own cultural characteristics, as for example in the case of Maya who live in the capital, or in the United States. It is fundamentally the communal life which fosters their maintenance of cultural practices. But neither should we idealize indigenous communities; communal responsibilities are not always met, there are problems, errors, wrongdoings. But what has made survival possible is communal practice, which is typical.

Since the end of Guatemala's 35-year civil war in 1996, there has been a stunning growth of Mayan rights organizations working both on the national and community level. Alvaro Pop, a 30 year-old Q'eqchi speaker from Alta Verapaz, has been a key figure in the rebirth of the Mayan rights movement.

Pop was a founding member of COPMAGUA, the national umbrella organization that represents hundreds of indigenous groups. This past year Pop was in charge of COPMAGUA's campaign to pass a series of civil rights amendments to the constitution. He currently works at the Mesoamerican Regional Research Center (CIRMA) in Antigua, Guatemala where he conducts research on interethnic relations.

Pop spoke at a CUSLAR event in October as part of a national speaking tour organized by the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA). The following interview was conducted by Daniel Fireside, a long time CUSLAR member and Guatemala activist. Translation from Spanish by Estelle Tarica.

For more information contact NISGUA at http://www.nisgua.org

If one element of the communal sentiment within
indigenous groups come from their isolation, do you think that the new context of globalization, and of interaction within Guatemala as well, poses a threat to that communal history and practice?

Well, we shouldn't think that the collective derives from isolation. No. That is, the collective has been strengthened when there has been distance from urban centers, but not because of that distance. The origin of the Maya, their perspective and their vision of work and things is not due to isolation. That's why I mentioned the example of the urban areas. There are a couple of studies in Guatemala on the ways that Mayans live in the capital, for example, where collectivity has been maintained. I think this principle will help us confront globalization, because globalization is seen only from the economic perspective. While it's true that economics is a very strong component of globalization, particularly as regards consumption - we are all consumers of Coca-Cola and we all know about McDonald's - but globalization also needs to be understood as the bringing near of distance. With this bringing near of distance, what results is that we are finding ourselves to be different. We are seeing that there are others, and that these others have their particularities. And in the case of the Maya, one of their particularities is collective sentiment, which will undergo transformation and blending within globalization, just like any other cultural dynamic. As Mayas enter globalization - and in fact we are already in it - our cultural dynamic has seen changes, and that is very normal. There is no culture which is static. There is always a dynamic of change and transformation, and still there are essentials which endure. There are even essentialist groups, in every culture, who will always try to avoid outside influences. But this is normal for all cultural groups.

Some people have observed that the concept of a "Mayan" people, as something which describes the Guatemalan indigenous community, is a relatively new term, and that in fact there is more of a tendency among indigenous people to identify with the linguistic or regional community. Do you think that perception has any validity, and that there is a feeling of nation and peoplehood among Guatemalan indigenous groups?

Yes, I do think so. Let's say that there are some rather stale anthropologists who make use of very closed concepts to say that, if you run into a Mayan in a rural community, and you ask him, "Are you Mayan?", he'll say, "No, I'm Q'eqchi". This claim needs to be carefully analyzed. In the first place, we need to recognize that there are different levels of identity... One level is very local, the level of the linguistic community, which is very strongly felt among the Kiché, the Kaqchikel, the Q'eqchi — among all the linguistic communities, language is a determining factor of identity. But we've also found that there are other denominators which are not only common among different groups but which
also anchor the process of identity. So that if one encounters a Kaqchikel person who is visiting the Q'eqchi area, there are concepts which are used to signify "He is one of ours." In the case of my language the word which defines this is k'a qomom ... This is a concept that goes beyond local identities. I think we have to recognize that it's true that the term "Maya" is a term which has very recently been politically unfurled, but I don't think it is a new term. What is new is the use of this term for political reasons by the Mayan population in its struggle for recognition and change. I think its healthy and timely.

Rights of Indigenous Peoples has generated a new debate within our communities. This is fundamental, and it emerges from the Mayan

"As Mayas enter globalizing our cultural dynamic has seen changes, and that is very normal. There is no culture that is static."

organizations. That is, not only to have ideas which remain ideas within the Accord, and which we try to put into effect. There have also been different tendencies within the Mayan movement and Mayan organizations who debate each one of these possibilities of political work on the basis of the Accord. I think this is positive.

On the other hand, the Indigenous Rights Accord opened possibilities for joint construction between the government and indigenous peoples, although I don't know what the short-term results of this will be. But initially I think this experience is very useful. And finally, I think the Accord re-valORIZED the human situation of indigenous peoples from an official perspective for the first time in Guatemalan history. They had always been seen as something backward, as a burden to Guatemala's development, and this has not allowed for inter-ethnic relations in egalitarian conditions or for joint projects. However, the fact that this Accord appeared, that it starts by saying it recognizes the existence of the Maya, Garifuna, and Xinka peoples, this gives us another perspective. This is a value which the Maya, Garifuna and Xinka peoples have taken up ourselves to valorize ourselves, because all these years of exploitation and discrimination have convinced many people that in truth they are worth nothing.

Do you think this debate is only at the level of the Mayan elite, of those who have access to national organizations or education, or has it also reached the majority of Mayans, those who don't speak Spanish and don't have access to education?

Initially it's an elite debate, just as with any social or cultural movement, which are always led by elites. This shouldn't make us Mayans feel bad. But it is reaching the mass of people, in different ways in different regions. In the case of my community there has been a debate at another level about
Mayan identity in the community. Here people associated with the Catholic church have had an especially important role to play, along with some progressive Protestant groups. Young activists begin to ask themselves, “Who are we, really?” “What do we want?” This search for identity

"The Accord revalorized the human situation of indigenous peoples from an official perspective for the first time in Guatemalan history."

around cultural particularities is a process which may come to enrich elite proposals, and hopefully soon. The elite will then have to put to their own proposals to the test in this debate.

As many academics have said, national construction movements have different moments. A national reconstruction of this type can be designed by a political group, put into practice by political engineering, and validated by a social movement, which enriches this process, which then comes back again to the elite. I think this is what’s happening with the Mayan people... Where it will take us, we don’t know, and we won’t know, because it doesn’t depend on the elites. If it did, then perhaps we’d already know the outcome of this process. But it must depend on the base. I think Mayan academics, intellectuals and politicians have a big responsibility. It needs to be grounded in constant communication with the base. Otherwise, we wouldn’t have a social movement as a base of support for the process of political action.

Historically in Guatemala, political debate has essentially been dominated by ladinos, on the Right and the Left, and even in the new peace process, the progressive political parties on the Left are dominated by ladinos. What do you think ladinos who want profound changes in Guatemala need to confront, what issues do they have to analyze?

The first step, at the national level, is to recognize that we are different. Many people have said that one of the steps towards national construction in Guatemala is that ladinos or the “non-indigenous” people have to define themselves. I don’t think this is necessary - or it is necessary, but it’s not a priority. The social group, which is culturally differentiated, will define its identity when it considers this relevant, and when the dynamic of each culture decides that it is the time to do this. We can’t force the ladino population to claim their identity as ethnically and culturally different in order to take their seat at the table of national construction. We can’t do that. We have to begin somewhere. This beginning needs to start with the initial recognition that we are different. Who are we? There will be a phase of ethnic identification. And that is one of the first things which I think we have to overcome. Within the non-indigenous people of Guatemala, there are still debates around their identity, about whether they are creoles, ladinos, mestizos, or simply Guatemalan. But I think that to say "simply Guatemalan" is to hide one’s own identity and its cultural and ethnic particularities. They will have to overcome this in order to construct their own identity. What I think the Mayan people are proposing is a search for things we have in common which allow us to then imagine national unity, but starting from cultural differences. This has to be taken up voluntarily, not imposed, as has historically been the case in Guatemala, where we haven’t participated and - I’ll say it straight out - we haven’t had the responsibility for what is happening.
CHIAPAS
Army violence a daily reality

By Hermann Bellinghausen, correspondent. Reprinted from La Jornada, Tuesday, October 12, 1999.

LA REALIDAD, CHIAPAS—October 11. It looked like the federal government helicopter was about to touch the top of the fruit trees in the community. That is how low it flew overhead today. A girl who works in the small clinic, taking her hand away from her mouth, said:
"It felt like it was going to land."

Tension immediately sets in throughout the town. The younger children run towards the houses and sheds. The bigger ones remain out in the open. The aircraft turns towards the ejidal house and the school, just a few meters above the ground. Then, it widens its circle and veers towards the Aguascalientes esplanade. It's a large helicopter. The cabin is open on both sides, and soldiers are openly filming from both doors. Next to them, an official is pointing out, with his index finger, different points in La Realidad, for the camera, and for someone else.
"It's been three days now," Mariano says, in the doorway of the ejidal house.

The helicopter, more precisely, the artillery helicopter, ends up making 11 slow, interminable circles at noon. Later, after 2:30, it repeats its ostentatious inspection.

The rains have severely damaged the roads in the Selva. It is impossible, therefore, to make the trip from La Realidad and the Euseba River by car. The land patrol, which crosses the community everyday - covering the 15 kilometer distance from the barracks of Guadalupe Tepeyac and the Euseba - only makes it a hundred meters from this community, when a landslide blocks the road. The 20 Army vehicles that made the patrol today stayed here for about half an hour, and then they returned to the barracks at Guadalupe Tepeyac, crossing this town once more.

This is not without interest, since, in order to initially justify this operation, the Army has, for some time now, been saying that it is a "supply column." What has never been made clear is whether it's the Guadalupe Tepeyac barracks supplying those at the Euseba River, or the other way round.

Regardless, with the road blocked, no supplies are possible. Nonetheless, the comings and goings of military vehicles continues around La Realidad, restricting themselves to the function, not admitted, of patrolling and terrify the civil population.
Letter from Mexican NGO’s

To national and international civil society:
To national and international human rights organizations:

Since August 14, the Mexican army has sent 10,000 soldiers into new camps in the Lacandon Jungle. For the first time since 1994, the army has penetrated the Montes Azules biosphere where the general command of the EZLN is presumed to live. Approximately thirty communities in the region are in a virtual state of siege. Army troops attacked the inhabitants of Amador Hernández in the municipality of Ocosingo with US-made tear gas, wounding several indigenous men and women. Access to the community has been obstructed, even for the people who live there. The army has taken possession of lands near the community and has surrounded them with barbed wire. The community is being terrorized by constant airplane and helicopter flights over the area and by the presence of Public Security forces.

On Thursday August 19, PRI supporters from Taniperlas detained three members of the Fray Bartolomé Human Rights Center, who were on their way to investigate the arbitrary detention of three people from the community Viejo Velasco. One of the community members, Pedro Gómez Aguilar, has been missing since July 23. The PRI supporters detained the human rights workers for two hours, threatening them and repeating xenophobic rhetoric such as “you are foreigners and are coming to impede the progress of this area,” even though the detainees were all Mexican. The PRI members also told the human rights workers that only the Ocosingo municipal authorities could give permission to travel through that area, and if they tried to enter again without authorization they would have to pay the consequences. Finally, the PRI supporters gave them half an hour to leave, threatening that if they did not, members of the community would burn their vehicle.

On August 21, a Mexican doctor and two foreign human rights observers were brutally beaten by a group of PRI supporters who were blocking the road immediately after a military checkpoint in the community of Vicente Guerrero, municipality of Las Margaritas. The PRI supporters sexually assaulted the female doctor. So far, no authority has responded to the formal complaints filed.

The substitute governor of Chiapas, Roberto Albores Guillen, has mounted a xenophobic campaign. In an unprecedented act, the xenophobia has even been directed at Mexican citizens, as in the aforementioned cases. Officials have also threatened to expel from Chiapas Mexican actress Ofelia Medina, who is known for her strong work around human rights abuses. The National Institute of Immigration has increased its presence at checkpoints on the roads to indigenous communities and is expelling many foreigners using the so-called “definitive departure order.” It is also worrisome that this week Immigration agents have been visiting hotels in San Cristobal, searching for names and room numbers of tourists in order to give them citations.

Army troops have, on many occasions, violated the Mexican Constitution. Examples include violations of the right to free transit, free expression and article 129, which states: “In peace-time, no military authority can carry out functions other than those that have a direct connection to military discipline. There will only be permanent and fixed military commanders in the bases, forts, and military warehouses that are directly dependent on the federal government or in the camps, barracks, and deposits that are established, outside of population control.”
centers, to station troops." The army is also violating its own Military Justice Code. No sanctions have been applied by Executive, Legislative or Judicial authorities and no one has been prosecuted for these violations. In fact, these government officials have been co-participants in the unconstitutional operations, maintaining a climate of terror in indigenous communities. At the same time, the state government is agitating PRI militants from indigenous communities to block roads and prevent national and international observation in areas where the most grave injustices have occurred, so no witnesses can attest to these human rights violations.

We respectfully and urgently call for visitors, observers or accompaniers for the above-mentioned indigenous communities, in order to restrain the repressive actions orchestrated by the federal government and carried out by the state government and members of the Mexican National Army.

Experience and history confirm that the presence of observers, both national and international, help to prevent massacres and repression. Moreover, individuals have the right to carry out human rights observation under the UN Convention on Human Rights, which has been signed by Mexico.

Sincerely,

CIEPAC, A.C; Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas; SOS Chiapas; Red de Derechos Humanos Todos los Derechos para Todos; Comisión Mexicana para la Defensa y Promoción de Derechos Humanos; Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez; Enhance Civil; Kinal Antiztik; Boletín Resistencia; Junax; Formacion y Capacitacion, A.C.; Coordinadores Regionales de los Altos, Costa y Soconusco; Centro; Frontera Sur y Norte por la Consulta en Chiapas.
Editor's note:

Today, there are approximately 60,000 military troops in Chiapas, representing over 1/3 of the Mexican Army. The military has increased its road-building campaign to facilitate army movements and besiege the zapatistas, accompanied by heavy violence in areas like Amador Hernandez, where 6000 soldiers are stationed under the pretext of reforestation. Since 1994, over 21,159 persons have been displaced from indigenous communities.

Mexico's upcoming presidential elections (July 2, 2000) have sparked a program of municipal boundary redefinitions, a project of "sophisticated electoral fraud" authorized by Congress and instituted by the state government, which creates 33 new municipalities in the Zapatista-controlled conflict areas. Senator Pablo Salazar Meduguchia states that the established goal for the three-stage municipalization program, according to internal documents he holds belonging to the Remunicipalization Commission of the Roberto Albores government, is to obtain 67,000 votes for the PRI while at the same time taking steps forward in the counterinsurgency strategy against the EZLN. By redrawing district lines so that each county seat (and therefore control of government aid and resources) falls in PRI-controlled areas, the plan has already succeeded in fracturing Zapatista communities and returning some to PRI control, according to Ernesto Ledesma, coordinator of Global Exchange's Human Rights Program in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas.

NEXT in the CUSLR Newsletter: Interview with Ernesto Ledesma, in which we learn of the co-optization of indigenous youth to paramilitary groups in Chiapas and the "publicity show" around the new Amnesty Law, in which paramilitaries dress up as "repentant Zapatistas," turning in weapons in exchange for government rewards.

For more information on Chiapas, see www.sipaz.org and www.ciepac.org
Whose Trade Organization?

On November 2, sixteen grassroots activists from around the world visited Ithaca as part of the People’s Global Action Caravan, which is traveling cross-country to Seattle to protest the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization from Nov 29 to Dec 3. The activists believe that the WTO meeting will “sow the seeds for further erosion of human rights, environmental protection and health and safety standards” in the name of economic liberalization and free trade.

Activists from Panama’s Kuna indigenous population shared their experiences of marginalization and exploitation by transnational mining and oil companies, who utilize indigenous lands without authorization from indigenous communities.

Taira Stewart, a member of the Youth Movement of Kuna, an organization that works for the economic, social and environmental culture of indigenous youth in Panama, spoke on the consequences of Intellectual Property Rights and the WTO. She explained how one company working in Panama today is attempting to copy traditional hand-sewn mola clothing, patent the designs, and mass-produce the traditional clothing at the expense of local craftspeople. A hydro-electric dam controlled by a TNC has created extensive environmental destruction in harvest areas for traditional medicines in Panama.

Brazil. In what España described as a “race to the bottom,” ENRON and other non Bolivian companies receive enormous tax breaks, reducing regular government royalties derived from Bolivian natural gas and oil from 44 to 18 percent, and allowing exploration and development on indigenous land. Social programs including health and education suffer due to the loss of revenue, while corrupt Bolivian officials and corporations themselves benefit. And if the government refuses? Enron will place its operations (and potential jobs) somewhere else.

Local policies aimed at rewarding companies who hire local residents, use domestic materials, or adopt environmentally sound practices are essentially illegal under the WTO. And developing countries are prohibited from following the same policies that developed countries used to become internationally competitive. As a result, the policies of the WTO and the neo-liberal model provoke the question of social justice, as profit takes precedence over people in today’s global society. For more information on the WTO and the growing movement of protest against the process of corporate globalization, or how to participate in rallies worldwide on November 30 to protest the WTO, call CUSLAR at 255-7293 or email cuslar@cornell.edu.

A generation of activists and college students has read I, Rigoberta Menchu, an autobiography compiled by the French anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, based on transcriptions of taped interviews with the twenty-three-year-old Quiché Maya woman in 1982. Menchu's story is read for its personal, spell-binding account of the struggle and suffering of a Maya family like many others.

Thousands of other testimonies have since been collected in Guatemala and around the world. Testimonio has emerged as a literary genre to record and honor the history of ordinary and extraordinary people who have lived the struggles of poverty and social injustice, organization for civil protest or armed revolution, and/or horrific conditions of repression designed by the military forces of their own nation. Each personal tale tells a bit of the larger collective story: Menchu's narrative more than any other seems to synthesize the experience of an entire people.

A year ago, David Stoll's book burst on the scene with a prominent article in the New York Times, accusing Menchu of falsifying her life story and those of her family. Human rights activists and anthropologists who have worked for years in Guatemala were less surprised than others. We all knew what David Stoll had documented: that Menchu's story as told by Burgos-Debray is in fact a composite of many experiences of different individuals based on narratives told to her, only some of it based on her personal experience and direct observation. This testimonio is a compilation of oral histories constructed into the artificial unity of a personal narrative - a strategy for telling a "big truth" analogous to that of historical or ethnographic fiction. That is why, as Stoll admits, it is in some sense representative of the story of "all poor Guatemalans."

Stoll’s book demonstrates his mastery of minute documentation, and emerges as a complex and rich contribution to a history of rural farmers, student activists, government officials, revolutionaries, reactionaries, and representatives of a vast majority simply caught up in a violent history. He presents convincing evidence that corrects the representation of some specific incidents, like the immobilization of Menchu's father and other activists in the takeover of the Spanish Embassy in 1980. His many interviews with survivors of the times and places that compose Menchu's story are of immense value, and paint a picture of imperfect people doing their best (usually) in circumstances that require heroism. However, Stoll himself is a strikingly unheroic figure, and his bitterness emerges in lengthy passages verging on diatribes that are interspersed in every chapter. He could have used a stronger editor.

The personal sections of Stoll’s book reveal a man who has built an academic career on debunking the myth of the noble peasant revolutionary of Guatemala. Stoll clearly feels that he has been unjustly criticized for presenting the voice of the cynical and
embittered, of those who act out of ignorance, of those who believe it is best to collaborate with the Guatemalan military forces, and of those simply caught "in between two armies."

While the documentation in Stoll's book testifies to his academic skill and his intent of intellectual honesty, the interpretive sections that stitch his story together are marked by two contradictory purposes. First, Stoll wishes to tear down the larger-than-life heroic images of Maya activists to reveal persons of humble stature, shifting political strategy, and complex and human lives. Second, he seeks to place himself as the ultimate authority on Rigoberta Menchú, and therefore alternates harsh personal criticisms of her with general statements that restore her as a hero.

Ironically, Stoll's book fails his own criteria of truth and authenticity, as he compiles many bits of truth into a biased narrative as much about his personal re-vindications and self-aggrandizement as about setting the historical record straight in Guatemala.

Maya anthropologist and activist Alvaro Pop recently described the impact of Stoll's attack on Menchú inside Guatemala. A meeting of Maya activists was called as a forum for individual statements in dialogue with Rigoberta, who was present. To the surprise of many of the hundreds present, every Maya congressperson appeared—e ven the representative from Rios Montt's political party, whose extremely conservative perspective, rooted in Evangelical faith, is like those Stoll has sought to represent over the years. Speaker after speaker, across the whole political spectrum, stood up to express their solidarity with Menchú in the face of an arrogant U.S. academic who dared to present himself as a more authentic voice. They also demonstrated that articulate and well-informed Maya civic leaders abound in Guatemala today, a striking legacy of the heroic work of the Maya catechists, educators, activists, and revolutionaries of twenty years ago.

Ann Peters is a member of the CUSLR Advisory board and the Guatemala Scholars Association. She teaches anthropology at Ithaca College.

Borderless Borders: U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans and the Paradox of Interdependence
Eds. Frank Bonilla, Edwin Melendez, Rebecca Morales, and Maria de los Angeles Torres

This anthology of essays attempts to link the changing economy of globalization, the relationship between Latin America and the United States, and the emerging U.S. Latino population. The book is divided into four thematic sections that attempt to establish the inter-relationships between these subjects.

Section one focuses on the politics of globalization and the role U.S. Latinos have in the NAFTA economy and the U.S. policies of immigration. Manuel Pastor's essays illustrates the links between Latin Americans and Latinos as under-represented, working class victims of globalization.

Section two addresses the changing demographics of the United States and the role U.S. Latinos play in shaping the next century. The essays discuss the acculturation, assimilation or adjustment of Latino children in the U.S., the development of barrios, or organized communities of immigrants, and the material reality of Latino immigrants in the U.S. Next, Jorge Chapa's essay theorizes on the future of Latino communities in the U.S. given the constant influx of immigration and the rise of a new professional class of U.S. Latinos.

In section three, performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña discusses the relationship between Mexican and Chicano cultural practices and identity politics in the U.S. Other essays include a discussion of Dominican immigrants and theoretical
discussions of the nature of race relations in
the U.S.

Finally, the last section of the book argues
for the creation of global civil society to cope
with emerging markets and changing social
realities using the relationship between Latin
Americans and U.S. Latinos as a starting point.
Pedro Cabán, Cornell LSP director, discusses
the changing academic relationship between
Latin American and U.S. Latino studies centers
at colleges and universities.

Noehemy Solorzano is a PhD Candidate in
Romance Literature at Cornell University and a
CUSLAR member.

The Indian in Latin American
History: Resistance,
Resilience, and Acculturation,
Revised Edition
Ed. John E. Kicza
Jaguar Books
Wilmington, DE, Scholarly Resources, 2000

This newly revised edition of the 1993
classic substitutes some earlier case studies
with new chapters. Robert Haskett's "Coping in
Cuernavaca with the Cultural Conquest" tells
how the native peoples of the Cuernavaca
region did not oppose the Spanish conquest
militarily, and in fact, adopted many European
customs and Catholic practices. Most notably
was their adoption of mercantile practices and
privatization of property, virtually unknown in
pre-conquest times.

Paul Charney's "Negotiating Roots: Indian
Migrants in the Lima Valley during the Colonial
Period" discusses how forced migration to the
city of Lima in colonial Peru separated
indigenous communities from their traditions
and homeland, causing many native peoples to
lose cultural ties to traditional societies.

David McCreery's "State Power, Indigenous
Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century
Guatemala, 1820-1920" chronicles how the
coffee boom caused European landowning
elites to usurp indigenous lands in the
highlands of Guatemala. He also discusses the
institutionalization of state violence during
this period, which allowed the landowning
elites to strip indigenous peoples of peripheral
lands.

Finally, Alan R. Sandstrom's "Ethnic
Identity and Its Attributes in a Contemporary
Mexican Indian Village" discusses the changing
material reality in an indigenous, Nahua
community in Mexico. Sandstrom addresses
the contemporary issues affecting indigenous
peoples, what defines "Indian", changing
economic factors, and the cultural exchange
between indigenous and mestizo communities.

The revised edition also includes a new
introduction by John E. Kicza and a new list of
suggested readings and films. This text
remains a primary source for academic inquiry
about native peoples in Latin America.

Noehemy Solorzano

Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon
Mexico
Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán
Translated by Sonya Lissett-Rivera and Sergio Rivera Ayala
Wilmington, DE, Scholarly Resources, 1999

Juan Pedro Viqueira Albán's 1981 case study
on social customs and practices in Bourbon
Mexico (Relajados o reprimidos? Mexico, Fondo
de Cultura Económica, 1981) appears for the
first time in English. Viqueira Albán's analysis of
the last decades of the 17th
century illustrates how Bourbon
courts in New Spain implemented
new social regulations to attempt
to address the perceived notion
that social norms had relaxed
among the popular classes.

Viqueira Albán studies
changes in bullfighting, theater,
and social disorder or street
diversions in Bourbon Mexico to
illustrate evolving social norms.
Court reforms regimented and
stratified social classes, aiding the organization of urban space by institutionalizing barrios and cuarteles to compartmentalize the city into units. Finally, Viqueira Albán talks about the importation of the juego de pelota (jai-alai) from the Basque country to New Spain as a new form of order among the middle-class in Bourbon Mexico.

Viqueira Albán’s analysis problematizes the notion that Bourbon reforms in New Spain limited social practices. He argues that such reforms in fact caused social unrest and the eventual formation of the Republic. Yet ironically, Viqueira Albán states, it was in Independent Mexico that the ideals of the Enlightenment and the separation of social classes and limitation of social space occurred.

—Nohemy Sotolongo

The Second Century: US-Latin American Relations Since 1889

by Mark E. Gilderhus
Scholarly Resource Books, Inc.
Wilmington, DE, 2000

Mark Gilderhus presents a remarkably readable and interesting overview of the complicated history behind US-Latin American Relations during the last century. Detailing U.S. goals and tactics, and examining the economic and political themes that led towards hemispheric and world hegemony, Gilderhus also analyzes the Latin American responses to U.S. overtures from the period of New Diplomacy in the 1890s to the end of the Cold War.

Leading the reader through the era of New Diplomacy and the establishment of commercial empire, as the responsibility for regional peace and order was ceded to the U.S. by Britain, Gilderhus shows how economic expansion actually compounded instability in Latin America by disturbing traditional relationships between products and people.

Gilderhus examines the epics of Revolution, War, Depression, Dependency, the Cold War, and the “Limits of Hegemony,” and the implications of these periods for Latin America. Chapter 5 recounts the impact of the Cuban Revolution on U.S. policy towards Latin America, as the traditional dependent relationship between the U.S. and Latin America was threatened. The subsequent fear of Communism provided justification for other acts of American intervention in the Dominican Republic, Chile, and elsewhere, and offered opportunity for the promotion of the liberal economic model and investment throughout Latin America.

In his conclusion, Gilderhus points out that “For Latin Americans, the asymmetries of power, wealth, and influence have posed continual obstacles.” Always vulnerable to the global economy, which has traditionally been biased towards US preferences, Latin America has limited options within the “pro-US Western Hemisphere idea.”

Sponsored Identities—Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico

Arlene M. Davila
Temple University Press
Philadelphia, 1997

In the context of social and political unrest, Puerto Rican cultural identity and nationalism has always reared its head as a rallying cry against injustice, oppression, and colonial rule. In August, 150,000 people marched in San Juan for the unconditional release of 16 Puerto Rican political prisoners, national heroes to an overwhelming percentage of Puerto Ricans. On July 4th, 1999, 50,000 marched to the gates of U.S. Naval Base at Roosevelt Roads, in Ceiba, P.R., to demand the U.S. Navy leave the island of Vieques. In July of 1998, a general strike on the Island occurred in response to police brutality towards striking telephone workers protesting the sale of their publicly owned company by the Governor of P.R., to a privately owned foreign company. In all of these instances, political lines between statehood, commonwealth, or independence fade as they participate in unison, amidst the waving Puerto Rican flags and the invocation of traditional music, against injustice or in favor of national heroes.

Arlene M. Davila’s Sponsored Identities explores the factors which have shaped today’s Puerto Rican Culture. In the context of a colonized nation what is the “true identity”? Davila examines cultural nationalism as a political construct that involves grassroots

continued on next page
Revindicaciones Viequenses
R. Rabin
Playa Carrucho (Conch Beach)
Bombing Range of the U.S. Navy on Vieques
8 May 1999

In the constant Southerly breeze you can hear the scream of the Guatemalan people. Bullets with the name of Jacobo Arbenz mix with sea shells and unexploded bombs stuck in the white sand of the beach. The whisper of the waves sings the song of the Popular Unity Party of Chile and a brown pelican writes, with the movement of his flight, the name of Salvador Allende. On the ocean bottom, a short distance from where the invasion of Cuba was practised in 1961, lay old fragmentation grenades labeled: US Navy Bay of Pigs. The intense heat of the Vieques sun burns the skin, as did the bullets that left this place to enter Dominican skin in 1965. The napalm that burned so many children and old women in the rice fields of Vietnam left its petroleum stench and gelatinous existence in the contaminated Arones lagoon. Sandino raises his fist from the highest point on Conejo Key—but the pelicans that nest there cannot hear his call over the sound of mortars that kill his people. The suffering of a hundred thousand Iraq and Kosovar children turn the sound of the breeze into a continuous weeping in this bombing zone at Vieques.

But now, each bomb crater turns into a smile, fed by young warriors from Biekê* and Boriken* who have come to revindicate Vieques, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Chile, and thousands of Children in Vietnam, Iraq, and Kosovo.

* The taino indigenous names for Vieques and Puerto Rico.

organizers, political parties, and corporate economic goals.

The Jibaro (rural peasant) is the embodiment of the three ancestral heritages—Spanish, African, and the Taino indigenous cultures. According to Davila, the Jibaro is the "most important building block of nationality in Puerto Rico." Traditionally the Jibaro is viewed as a white male, rural and devoid of visible African or Taino components. She points out that this image coincides with a persistent racism and the "continuous idealization of the Spanish heritage", legacies of the former colonizer.

Davila refers to corporate interests as "added players" in the conceptualization of Puerto Rican identity. Capitalizing on cultural identity for profit and political gain, the corporate sector appeals to nationalist icons and symbols in its product advertising and has become the primary sponsor of many festivals throughout the island.

Finally, Davila concludes by showing how a range of actors actively engage in the cultural nationalist discourse, fearing the threat of American commercialism to what is conceived as the "purity" of Puerto Rican culture.

--Teresa Grady is a local activist on issues of Puerto Rican independence and a long-time CUSLAR member.
On October 19, a US Presidential panel recommended that the U.S. Navy resume training exercises at its disputed bombing range at Vieques, Puerto Rico, but to shut the base down within five years. Vieques has been used as a live firing range from the 1940s until last April 19th, when a mistakenly dropped bomb killed a civilian guard. That event sparked international recognition of the ongoing struggle of Vieques citizens, with the U.S. government now facing serious protest and calls to close the bombing range from Vieques residents, environmentalists, Puerto Ricans, and international civil society.

Activists who have been camped out on the bombing range since April had vowed that they will not accept the five year delay, and demand the immediate closure of the American military installation.

The military says that the training grounds are “vital to pilots’ military training and cannot be conducted elsewhere on the East Coast.” U.S. Navy spokesperson Lt. Commander Herman Phillips said Vieques was “ideal for bombing runs because of its deep waters, low commercial air traffic, and ability to handle aircraft carriers.”

Vieques, which covers 52 square miles and currently is home to 9,200 people, has been used in training for every major U.S. military exercise since the 1940s.

Scientific studies document serious environmental contamination from the chemical composition of the missiles’ charge and reaction, particles of dust and rock that are thrown into the atmosphere, and metallic residues left by the projectiles when they fragment.

“Cerro Matias [the Naval bombing zone] can be considered in its fundamental characteristics as a giant deposit of solid waste,” states Rafael Cruz Perez, a chemical engineer from Vieques. This contamination has reached drinking water sources of towns over 14 km. from the bombing site.

The U.S. Navy admits, after 6 years of denials, that it used napalm in 24 bombs dropped on Vieques in 1993. In addition, it “mistakenly fired” 267 rounds tipped with depleted uranium in February, in violation of federal laws.

The Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques have published a list of demands, including demilitarization, decontamination, devolution of lands to the people, and development. “The people of Vieques have a moral right to demand the US Navy pay for more than half a century of destruction and obstacles to our development. We demand a multi-billion dollar indemnization to be used in the process of social and economic development of a Free Vieques, a Vieques for the Viequenses.”

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HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LIBRARY

Those working in Latin American human rights will find that the Internet has become an important resource. Most of the major international organizations (UN, OAS) have established human rights portals in conjunction with their general sites, and a number of country-specific institutions maintain well developed resources as well. The following compendium of recommended sites only begins to enumerate the possibilities.

Human Rights within International Organizations
OAS www.oas.org/agenda.asp#humanrights; UN www.un.org/rights/

International Human Rights Organizations

Country/Area-Specific Sites


Central America: AAAS Science and Human Rights shr.aaas.org/program/index.htm; The Jennifer Harbury Page www-personal.engin.umich.edu/~pavr/harbury/index.html


Brazil: DHnet www.dhnet.org.br/

Chile: Derechos Chile www.derechoschile.com

Colombia: Colombia en Paz www.colombiapaz.org/frames.htm

Peru: Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos www.aprodeh.org.pe/

Uruguay: Servicio Paz y Justicia www.serpaj.org.uy/

Don't find what you’re looking for? A good starting place is UT Laníc’s Human Rights in Latin America page; laníc.utexas.edu/la/region/hrights/. And before I forget, there is a great deal of print literature on human rights in Latin America. A good example is the recently-published study of violations in the Southern Cone countries, Determinants of gross human rights violations by state and state-sponsored actors in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina 1960-1990.
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Thanks to the 65+ Ithaca-area activists now on the road to Ft. Benning, Georgia to demand the closure of the U.S. Army School of the Americas at the 10th Anniversary Commemorative Rally, taking place November 19-21. This trip was made possible thanks to the hundreds of area residents who supported this important journey through donations, benefit dinners, concerts, and love. We’re with you in solidarity as you cross the line for human rights in Latin America.
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http://www.rso.cornell.edu:8000/cuslar/classes.html