



CUSLAR Newsletter

Spring 2002



The Committee on U.S. - Latin American Relations

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

While it is always a struggle to keep a quarterly news publication current with timely news, this particular cycle of the CUSLAR Newsletter proved especially difficult. Since our last edition numerous events of drastic significance have occurred throughout Latin America—the political and economic crisis in Argentina, the collapse of the peace process in Colombia, the attempted coup in Venezuela, the increasing precariousness of human rights in Guatemala, etc.

Certainly, even our most avid readers do not rely solely, or even primarily on our little newsletter to keep them up-to-date. But where do they go for their news? The mainstream press has never considered Latin America to be a significant enough part of the world to devote much attention to, much less any meaningful analysis. Yet recent events have generated many more headlines than usual, leading one to suppose that perhaps (thanks to JayLo and Ricky?) Latin America is beginning to appear more often on the radar screen of the average American Jane (or Jose).

But more coverage doesn't necessarily guarantee a more complete picture as we see in the case of the recent events in Venezuela. While setting the stage with vague descriptions of street riots and general unrest, it was with undue haste that all of the major networks and publications reported that Hugo Chavez had resigned long before they had any official confirmation. We who are paying attention know this because there never was any confirmation due to the fact that Chavez never willingly left office. So how could all these networks and newspapers get their facts so wrong? Conspiracy theories abound, yet a more important question is, how do we know the facts to set the record straight? The answer: the Internet, or more specifically, Indymedia and Email.

What makes this particular moment in history significant from a media perspective is that we are beginning to see a major shift in the way people get their news. No longer must those of us with the simple tools of technology rely upon a highly-controlled, corporate media conglomerate to know what is happening in far-off lands. All we need to do is log on and get instant, unfiltered, eye-witness accounts of events. While we still have to maintain a certain level of skepticism and not believe everything we see or hear, at least we can choose which ones to listen to instead of having that choice made for us.

The consequences of increased access to alternative forms of media are astounding—we can hear the actual voices of those on the street, use them as proof of the people's collective will, and even reverse coups that threaten democratic rule.

The information revolution has officially begun.

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.

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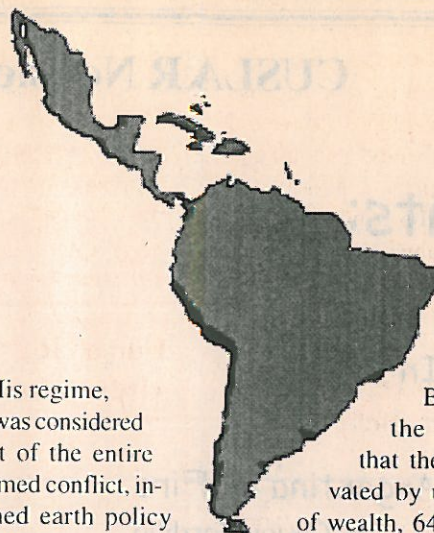
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In Brief...



Guatemalans Demand Compensation For Victims

On February 25 hundreds of campesinos demonstrated in front of the Congress in Guatemala City to demand justice for the massacre of the indigenous peoples of Guatemala during Guatemala's 36-year long internal armed conflict, as well as compensation to the surviving victims and all of the victims' families. "We are demanding trial and punishment for those responsible for the genocide that was committed against the indigenous people of the country," said Mario Polanco, who heads the Mutual Support Group (GAM).

The protests took place within the framework of the annual National Day of Dignity for the Victims of the Armed Conflict. The war officially ended with the signing of peace accords on December 29, 1996.

According to Polanco, the Commission for Historic Clarification (CEH) reported that some 200,000 people were killed and disappeared during the war. "The government has a budget of millions for the Army, but the victims of the war are forgotten," said Polanco.

Representatives of the Center for Human Rights Legal Assistance (Caldh), the campesino union (Cuc), National Coordinating Committee of Widows of Guatemala (Conavigua), the Alliance Against Impunity, GAM, and the University Students Association (AEU) participated in the protests, which ended with a mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral.

Among others, the protesters cited former military dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, now the president of the Guate-

malan Congress. His regime, from 1982 to 1983, was considered to be the bloodiest of the entire 36-year period of armed conflict, including the scorched earth policy which displaced indigenous peoples from their lands, and the extermination of entire towns, according to the Truth Commission Report issued on February 25, 1999, just over two years after the war officially ended.

Survivors of massacres carried out in Santa Ana Huista, a town located northeast of Guatemala City, whose population are indigenous Mam, recently buried the remains of 42 victims that were found by forensic anthropologists in a common grave. According to the forensic report, the Guatemalan Army arrived in the village on January 14, 1982 and gathered all the men in the central square where a woman pointed out those who allegedly collaborated with the leftist then-guerrilla army, the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). The soldiers tied the men up, took them to another village, executed them and buried them. The Truth Commission report said that the Army applied a systematic policy of terror and extermination against the civilian population to repress the advance of and any support for guerrilla organizations.

Guatemala News Update 3/5/02

Economies in Latin America Declining

Neoliberal structural reforms in Latin America have worsened the overall economic situation, according to 61% of Latin American economists polled by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), a branch of the World

Bank. According to the study, 85% agreed that the situation is aggravated by unequal distribution of wealth, 64% said that democracy does not function in the region, and 64% said that privatization has not been a good idea. Nevertheless, Eduardo Lora, the principal economist for the Department of Investigations of the IDB, said that reforms should continue. *Mexico Solidarity Network Weekly News Bulletin, 3/10/02*

Nicaragua Sells Hydroelectric Plants to Enron

In April, the Nicaraguan energy company ENEL announced that an Enron affiliate had won the bidding to acquire 2 of Nicaragua's hydroelectric plants that are being privatized. This announcement met with immediate opposition from Nicaraguan civil society and was denounced on the May first Workers' Day protests. On May 2, ENEL reversed their decision and awarded the plants to Costal Power, a U.S. company.

ENEL officials deny that the reversal was a result of popular pressure. Instead, they cite irregularities in Enron's proposal. For example, they found that the warranty that Enron had presented was only of US\$ 2 million, when it was previously agreed by the government that it should not be less than US\$ 240 million.

The privatization process is part of the result of Nicaragua's structural adjustment program under the International Monetary Fund. Under this program, Nicaragua must sell off many of its State-owned assets such as telecommunications, energy, and water industries.

Energy privatization continues even in the face of expert advice that the assets should not be sold because the plants are profitable, their sale would threaten Nicaragua's environment and water supply, and privatization leaves public services in the hands of a few transnational companies while threatening consumers with higher prices.

Nicaragua Network Hotline 5/8/02

SOA To Train Nicaraguan Soldiers

General Javier Carrion, head of the Nicaraguan Army, announced last week the new medium- and long-term plans of the Army which, he said, will probably result in "profound changes in our military doctrine which dates back to 1979." He added that it includes a "new strategy towards the government of the United States of America." He explained that Nicaragua now has a direct military relationship with the United States, "after a working trip that we made recently to visit with top officials of the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Security Council."

Carrion noted that this is the first time in 22 years that this army has received direct military support from the U.S. He said that this year 123 officers will receive training in the United States and that U.S. Special Forces will train a task force of 1,200 Nicaraguan troops who will have the "permanent capacity to combat terrorism and drug traffic night and day."

Equally alarming is the news that Nicaraguan officers are again receiving training at the School of the Americas (now Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation-WHISC) for the first time since the 1970s. On October 22nd, one officer began a course in Resource Management and Logistics and ten others will follow him in 2002, taking courses in Civil-Military Operations, Democratic Sustainment, Resource Management and Logistics, Human Rights (sic), Counter Drugs, Engineer Operations and Command and a General Staff Course. The training was confirmed by the School's public affairs officer, Lee A. Rials, in answer to an e-mail inquiry from the Nicaragua Network.

This is the first time that Members of the Nicaraguan Army and Police will be trained at the School since nearly 4,700 members of the brutal National Guard of the 45 year long Somoza dictatorship were trained at the school in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. For more information see www.nicanet.org

Nicaragua Network Hotline 3/4/02

Human Rights Groups Criticize Colombia Certification

Secretary of State Colin Powell has certified that the Colombian military has met congressionally mandated human rights requirements, freeing \$62 million in U.S. military aid for that country, officials said Wednesday. By law, the State Department must certify that the Colombian government has complied with several human rights conditions before releasing the first 60 percent of military aid for fiscal year 2002, an estimated \$104 million dollars. The remaining funds can be disbursed only after a subsequent certification this year.

Human Rights Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), and Amnesty International strongly objected to the U.S. State Department's decision to certify the Colombian government's compliance with human rights conditions given the Colombian government's failure to take even minimal steps to meet the conditions. In February, the groups called on the administration to withhold assistance to the Colombian military on grounds that it has not met human rights requirements.

At the time, Alexandra Arriaga, of Amnesty International, said, "In 2001, political violence increased, the massacre of civilians more than doubled in frequency, attacks on human rights defenders and trade unionists remained among the highest in the region and the perpetrators of human rights abuses continued to escape accountability."

A senior White House official who briefed reporters acknowledged that the Colombian judicial system is extremely weak, with only 3 percent of investigations leading to prosecutions.

The decision to certify came as no surprise as the Bush administration has been seeking to congressional authority to allow the Colombian military to use American-supplied equipment for counter-insurgency activities. Current rules limit use of the equipment for counternarcotics operations.

The State Department's decision was made despite abundant evidence demonstrating that little progress has been made in improving Colombia's dire human rights record. Despite the suspension of some low-ranking officers, the Colombian Armed Forces have refused to act on notorious cases such as that of General Rodrigo Quiñones. Quiñones has been implicated in two massacres as well as the murder of fifty-seven trade unionists, human rights workers, and community leaders.

Contrary to the State Department's assertions that effective measures have been taken to break links between the Colombian Armed Forces and illegal paramilitary groups, the certification provides no evidence of arrests or actions against key paramilitary leaders or high-ranking members of the Armed Forces credibly alleged to have collaborated with paramilitary groups.

The human rights situation in Colombia continues to deteriorate, as all illegal armed groups continue to target primarily civilians. In only the first four months of 2002, numerous human rights defenders have been killed. Others who face extreme danger include trade unionists, journalists, community leaders and political candidates.

Human Rights Watch Americas Director José Miguel Vivanco points out, "The administration is proposing millions in counter-terrorism aid to Colombia even as the Colombian military refuses to break ties with a designated terrorist group."

WOLA Executive Director Bill Spencer commented, "Many of the human rights cases under discussion have languished without progress for the past few years and some for over a decade. This fact speaks to the lack of progress on all three conditions. The decision to certify Colombia on human rights misrepresents the facts in order to keep the aid spigot open."

A joint document released in February by Human Rights Watch, the Washington Office on Latin America, and Amnesty International details the Colombian government's failure to meet the human rights conditions. It is available on line at: <http://www.hrw.org/press/2002/02/colombia0205.htm>.

ARGENTINA



ON FIRE!!

by Gastón R. Gordillo

December 19th, 2001. In the midst of the most severe economic crisis in Argentina's history, violent food riots swept through Buenos Aires and other large cities. President Fernando De la Rúa decreed the state of siege and that night he addressed the country on national TV. When he began his address, millions of people all over the country confirmed once again what they already knew: that De la Rúa seemed to live in another country. We had seen the images on TV: masses of men, women, and children desperately grabbing food from supermarket shelves, store-owners crying near their emptied grocery stores, over twenty people shot dead by cops, private security, armed owners. Despite that exploding reality assaulting our senses, all we heard from De la Rúa were requests to maintain "calm" and "peace" and vague references to "violent agitators and infiltrators." We heard no word on policy changes or cabinet resignations.

What happened next was, I find no better word, incredible. I was in Buenos Aires, in an apartment building located in a typical middle-class neighborhood, watching the presidential speech with my family with a mixture of perplexity and anger. Then, I heard something. It was the lonely yet clear

sound of somebody hitting a pot, a *cacerola*. I stood on the balcony facing the street. I saw an old woman hitting her pot two floors above me, and almost



immediately I heard the same metallic sound coming from across the street. Then there were three, four people, now ten, then twenty, each emerging from their apartments, creating something that was initially hard to grasp, but that was clearly new, collective, and—I soon realized—powerful.

As my family and I grabbed our own pots and pans and joined the emerging chorus, I could almost feel the invisible yet energizing threads connecting those thousands of individual knots spreading all over Buenos Aires like wild fire catching on dry grasslands. Once the

president's speech was over, TV and radio stations began reporting that spontaneous *cacerolazos* were emerging in every corner of the city, first in

balconies and roofs, then down in the streets. In a matter of minutes, the fire of protest had engulfed the whole city. The drought that took that urban landscape to the point of political combustion could not be more severe: 4 years of recession, 20 percent unemployment rate, rampant corruption, a Supreme Court at the service of political power, and over two decades of neo-liberal economic policies that had devastated small business, impoverished the middle class,

vice of political power, and over two decades of neo-liberal economic policies that had devastated small business, impoverished the middle class,

Porteño, Gastón Gordillo is a visiting Assistant Professor in the Anthropology Department at Cornell University. He wrote this article shortly after returning from Argentina where he participated in many of the street demonstrations.

and concentrated the economy in the hands of a few corporate conglomerates. In early December 2001, De la Rúa and his finance minister Domingo Cavallo had added yet another element to this already explosive formula: fearing the collapse of the banking system, all bank accounts were frozen, and severe restrictions were imposed on the amounts of money people were able to withdraw from their savings. In a matter of days, the flow of cash in the streets had shrunk unbelievably, the informal economy had collapsed, and a recurrent image was saturating the country: long lines in front of every bank, with anxious men and women of all ages and backgrounds trying to figure out the new, complex, and ever changing set of bank regulations imposed by the government. Yet even then, the anger, the frustration, the criticism brewing in millions of homes seemed dispersed in millions of fragmented cells, each of them consumed in their individual grumbling.

Yet there were many signs that multiple collective energies were just waiting for the moment to coalesce and explode. Since 1998, the most marginalized sector, the unemployed, were conducting a growing campaign of *piquetes* (pickets), setting blockades in some of the most important roads of the country in demand for jobs and state assistance. The *piqueteros* (picketers) were becoming increasingly organized. By mid-2001, several successful and massive blockades had forced the government to recognize them as legitimate political actors. Unions—even if divided between conservative and radical factions—had also launched several general strikes that succeeded in paralyzing much of the country. Finally, in the mid-term elections held in October 2001, the ruling coalition (*la Alianza*) lost by a landslide.

Even when the *Partido Justicialista* (then the main opposition party) got the largest share of the vote, the star of the election was the so-called “anger vote”, *el voto bronca*. As a protest against all political parties, four million people invalidated their votes or voted for no candidate. In Buenos

Aires, for instance, invalidated and blank votes captured the highest share of the popular vote (25%). In other words, the signs of social unrest were there, and collective struggles were popping up here and there in different parts of the country. But these struggles lacked a center of gravity and oftentimes they segregated classes and

In a matter of hours, ordinary people discovered something they thought they had lost forever: the power to create in the streets a collective force that could shake a government to its roots.

factions from one another. The growing radicalization of the *piqueteros* is a case in point.

As the *piqueteros* paralyzed important parts of the country, sectors of the Buenos Aires middle class became critical of their methods and complained that the pickets affected the “freedom of mobility” and the interest of small business. Even when both *piqueteros* and middle class *porteños* (people from Buenos Aires) were being affected by government policies, the relationship between the two was shaped by the old tension between the “European”, better-off districts of Buenos

Aires and the working-class suburbs and slums that surround it.

On the hot night of December 19th, marks of past defeats, old divisions and distrusts, old forms of indifference and individualism were suddenly turned upside down. That night, something old cracked and broke and something new was born. That night, the explosion of *cacerolas* shaking Buenos Aires led to massive demonstrations. By midnight, huge crowds had flooded the Plaza de Mayo, the site of the government house. When clashes with the riot police began, Domingo Cavallo, the finance minister, had already resigned. Yet that multitude, born in the heat of the night and almost immediately baptized with tear gas and rubber bullets, knew that it was not enough. The common demand, captured in the slogan, “*Que se vayan!*” (They must go!), was the resignation of the whole government. In a matter of hours, ordinary people discovered something they thought they had lost forever: the power to create in the streets a collective force that could shake a government to its roots. As I navigated the clouds of tear gas and the charges of the riot police, I could tell that all of us in the streets, the men and women walking, screaming, singing, and running next to me, relished at this newly discovered power.

The next day, December 20th,

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was a sunny, hot, beautiful day announcing the beginning of the summer. Downtown Buenos Aires became a huge battlefield, more violent and deadly than the night before. As more and more people converged on the Plaza de Mayo, often hearing the desperate calls from demonstrators on TV, the riot police began systematic repression. As the clashes unfolded, the fury of the multitude targeted emblems of neoliberalism and the bank freeze: banks, privatized companies, and multinational corporations. Hundreds of windows were systematically smashed and dozens of stores were looted. Amid a chilling landscape of burning barricades, charges of mounted police, masses of people charging on the cops, and showers of stones responding to tear gas canisters, eight demonstrators were killed by the police. Before nightfall, president De la Rúa had resigned.

The dizzying succession of events that followed defies summary: five presidents in twelve days, the formal declaration of the default of the foreign debt, new *cacerolazos* and waves of popular unrest, and the election of Eduardo Duhalde by the congress. The new Peronist president devaluated the peso by 40%, imposed more restrictions on the bank freeze (the so-called *corralito*), and in just two weeks betrayed his initial promise to respect the currency of savings in US dollars. As these events unfolded, the collective energies unleashed on December 19th went through a rapid process of growth and reconfiguration.

In a matter of weeks, the spontaneity of the first *cacerolazos* led to new forms of grassroots organization pushing for more radical reforms. This process has been fueled by the contradictions of Duhalde's shifting presidency, which fears the force of the *cacerolazos*, tries to appease the popular anger with a populist rhetoric, yet has gradually ceded spaces of power to the intense lobbying of the IMF, the banks, and the largest corporations. What type of political project is emerging from these protests? Do the *cacerolazos* simply represent, as some observers have pointed out (with a touch of cynicism), a petty,

typically middle-class obsession with bank-savings, a hypocritical display of anger that will evaporate as soon as the freeze is lifted? Or are we witnessing the emergence of a broader project of social change? It is certainly impossible to predict the direction that these forces will take in the future. But there are clear indicators that we are witnessing a level of social mobilization and unrest in Argentina of truly historical proportions. Moreover, we could well argue that this level of unrest is signaling the end of the neoliberal hegemony in Argentina.

The neoliberal project was first imposed in 1976 by the military dictatorship and during the 1980s it was challenged by forms of mobilization triggered by the return of democracy. Yet under Menem, during the 1990's, neoliberalism became hegemonic and enjoyed an important consensus, especially because of the government's ability to tame inflation. This consensus, even if always contested, surfaces in the fact that in 1995 Menem won his re-election by a landslide. The end of this hegemony does not mean that the powers that be are not still lobbying for the same policies that favored them in the 1990s. In this sense, the neoliberal project in Argen-

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tina is not dead yet; but it is severely wounded, and has rapidly lost the support of those sectors of the working and middle classes that in the early 1990s briefly believed in terms such as "privatization," "foreign capital," and "free-trade." Currently, to many in Argentina these words have become an anathema. Moreover, the emblems of those neoliberal policies, the privatized public-service companies (telephone,



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electricity, gas) and especially the banks, have become the focus of public anger, and their windows are regularly smashed even in small, previously quiet provincial towns.

This collapse of the previous patterns of hegemonic consensus has engulfed the whole political system. Since December 19th, the legitimacy crisis eroding traditional parties and the "political class" (*la clase política*), already clear in the October 2001 elections, has reached unparalleled levels. A striking feature of the *cacerolazos* is people's active refusal to subordinate their protest to political parties. When activists of small left-wing parties tried to spread their flags during the *cacerolazos*, people forced them to fold them down and demonstrate without symbols of party affiliation.

The dominant symbol of the *cacerolazos* has been, in addition to pots and pans and homemade signs with slurs against the political system, the Argentinean flag. I clearly remember that on December 20th, during the intense protests shaking Buenos Aires, those displays of patriotism and the passionate screams of "Argentina! Argentina!" made me feel uneasy. In addition to my own prejudices against the very notion of "patriotism," I felt that those flags and chants were obscuring the fact that the elites we were protesting against were also Argentinean, and that those appeals

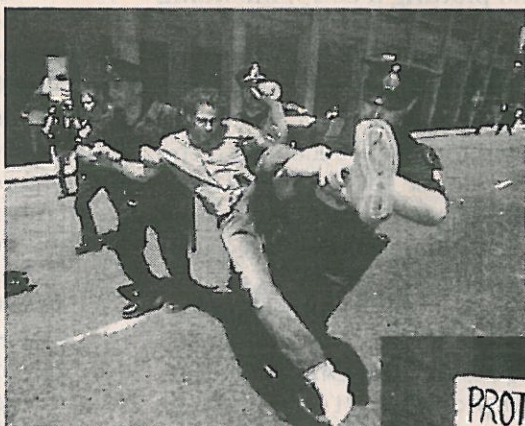
to *la patria* obscured very deep class conflicts. A few hours later, as I got more tired and my academic intellectualism began to recede, I discovered myself screaming "Argentina! Argentina!" like everybody else. And I realized that for those people, and even for me, these clearly essentialist appeals to "the nation," to the imagined community of "Argentines," was playing a powerful political role. They signaled the growing rift between the state, epitomized in "the government," and the nation, epitomized in "the people." And they did so by locating elites and politicians outside the boundaries of that imagined community, at the service of transnational capital and foreign interests.

This sweeping rejection of politicians and traditional parties has been captured in one of the most popular slogans people sing at the *cacerolazos*: "*Que se vayan todos, que no quede uno solo!*" ("All of them must go! None of them can stay!"). This concentration of the public wrath on *los políticos* has also meant that since December 19th people in the streets have assaulted and insulted dozens of politicians (senators, state secretaries, or former ministers). In the small city of Junín (in the province of Buenos Aires), an angry crowd even burned the house of a Peronist member of congress. This situation has deeply transformed the habits and routines of *los políticos*, who now fear the wrath of the masses and since late December rarely show up in public spaces.

Yet this negation of the traditional political hierarchies is at the same time part of the positive construction of altogether new forms of political organization, which did not exist before the *cacerolazos*. The most remarkable has been the explosive rise of *asambleas barriales* or *asambleas populares*: assemblies of neighbors who meet to coordinate protests, plan strategies, and debate political demands. Over the past four weeks, these

asambleas have mushroomed all over Buenos Aires and in other cities such as Rosario, Córdoba, and Mendoza. These expressions of direct democracy are one of the most remarkable and encouraging achievements of the movement born on the heat of December 19th.

How did these *asambleas* originate? After the spontaneous *cacerolazo* that contributed to toppling the brief presidency of Rodríguez Sáa the night of December 28th, the thou-



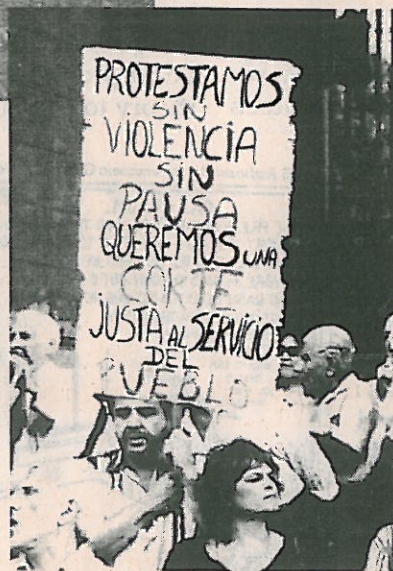
sands of people that had (once again) taken to the streets began to coalesce in clusters meeting in parks, street corners, and other public spaces. Still holding their pots and pans, and before going home, small groups began debating the strategies to follow.

In dozens of places and almost at the same time, many people simply said: "Why don't we meet again and start organizing?" And they did. In a few days, dozens of brand-new *asambleas barriales* were meeting all over Buenos Aires. Members of different *asambleas* were soon communicating through email and coordinating joint actions. On January 13, delegates of dozens of *asambleas* held their first joint meeting at a large park (*Parque Centenario*), where they debated strategies to follow and voted to meet every Sunday. Since

then, the Sunday meetings in *Parque Centenario* have become the neuralgic center of the *cacerolero* movement. They attract over 2,000 people from more than 40 *asambleas* who, after hours of intense debate, vote on the main political actions to be carried out that week.

The most immediate result of these forms of direct democracy has been an increased level of political organization and coordination. Even though spontaneous demonstrations of anger continue to emerge here and there, especially in front of banks, the largest *cacerolazos* have now become planned and organized events, which involve a rapidly expanding network of communication. Since January 25, there has been a national *cacerolazo* every Friday, and the coordination and planning of each event is increasingly organized through the Internet. In addition to the

website provided by Indymedia Argentina, by early February there were at least eight websites (based on variations of the word "*cacerolazo*") coordinating the actions of different *asambleas*. And a growing number of *asambleas* have been creating their own websites, some of which are quite sophisticated. This level of activity illustrates the intensity, the



energy, and the talents embedded in a movement that is barely one month old.

What are the demands emerging from the movement gradually taking shape in these *asambleas*? Could we argue that these assemblies are becoming a South American, urban, post-modern, and largely middle-class version of the Soviets? Much of the anger nourishing the assemblies certainly comes from the bank freeze, and the end of the *corralito* for small and mid-size saving accounts figures prominently in

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Venezuelan Coup Linked to Bush Team

Specialists in the 'Dirty Wars' of the eighties encouraged the plotters who tried to topple President Chavez

by Ed Vulliamy

The failed coup in Venezuela was closely tied to senior officials in the US government, *The Observer* has established. They have long histories in the 'dirty wars' of the 1980s, and links to death squads working in Central America at that time.

Washington's involvement in the turbulent events that briefly removed left-wing leader Hugo Chavez from power last weekend resurrects fears about US ambitions in the hemisphere.

It also deepens doubts about policy in the region being made by appointees to the Bush administration, all of whom owe their careers to serving in the dirty wars under President Reagan.

One of them, Elliot Abrams, who gave a nod to the attempted Venezuelan coup, has a conviction for misleading Congress over the infamous Iran-Contra affair.

The Bush administration has tried to distance itself from the coup. It immediately endorsed the new government under businessman Pedro Carmona. But the coup was sent dramatically into reverse after 48 hours.

Now officials at the Organisation of American States and other diplomatic sources, talking to *The Observer*, assert that the US administration was not only aware the coup was about to take place, but had

sanctioned it, presuming it to be destined for success.

The visits by Venezuelans plotting a coup, including Carmona himself, began, say sources, 'several months ago', and continued until weeks before the putsch last weekend. The visitors were received at the White House by the man President George Bush tasked to be his key policy-maker for Latin America, Otto Reich.

Reich is a right-wing Cuban-American who, under Reagan, ran the Office for Public Diplomacy. It reported in theory to the State Department,

were sold to the Contra guerrillas and death squads, in revolt against the Marxist government in Nicaragua.

Reich also has close ties to Venezuela, having been made ambassador to Caracas in 1986. His appointment was contested both by Democrats in Washington and political leaders in the Latin American country. The objections were overridden as Venezuela sought access to the US oil market.

Reich is said by OAS sources to have had 'a number of meetings with Carmona and other leaders of the coup' over several months.

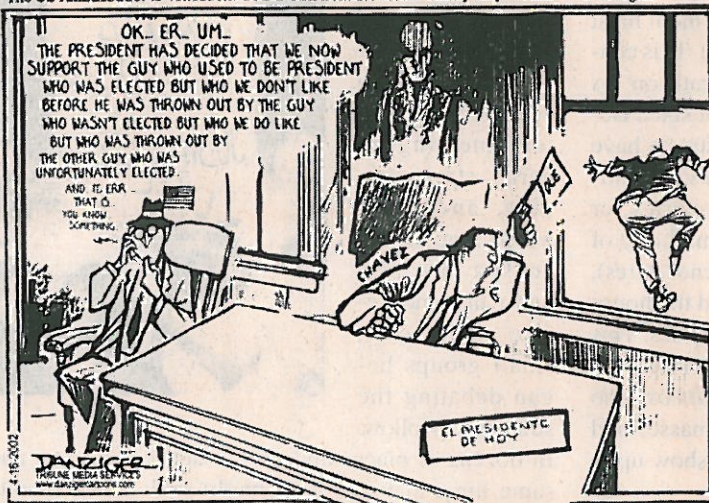
The coup was discussed in some detail, right down to its timing and chances of success, which were deemed to be excellent.

On the day Carmona claimed power, Reich summoned ambassadors from Latin America and the Caribbean to his office. He said the removal of Chavez was not a rupture

of democratic rule, as he had resigned and was 'responsible for his fate'. He said the US would support the Carmona government.

But the crucial figure around the coup was Abrams, who operates in the White House as senior director of the National Security Council for

The US Ambassador to Venezuela Gets a Call from the Moral Clarity Department in Washington



but Reich was shown by congressional investigations to report directly to Reagan's National Security Aide, Colonel Oliver North, in the White House.

North was convicted and shamed for his role in Iran-Contra, whereby arms bought by busting US sanctions on Iran

'democracy, human rights and international operations'. He was a leading theoretician of the school known as 'Hemispherism', which put a priority on combating Marxism in the Americas.

It led to the coup in Chile in 1973, and the sponsorship of regimes and death squads that followed it in Argentina, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and elsewhere. During the Contras' rampage in Nicaragua, he worked directly with North.

Congressional investigations found Abrams had harvested illegal funding for the rebellion. Convicted for withholding information from the inquiry, he was pardoned by George Bush senior.

A third member of the Latin American triangle in US policy-making is John Negroponte, now ambassador to the United Nations. He was Reagan's ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985 when a US-trained death squad, Battalion 3-16, tortured and murdered scores of activists. A diplomatic source said Negroponte had been 'informed that there might be some movement in Venezuela on Chavez' at the beginning of the year.

More than 100 people died in events before and after the coup. In Caracas on Friday a military judge confined five high-ranking officers to indefinite house arrest pending formal charges of rebellion.

Chavez's chief ideologue - Guillermo Garcia Ponce, director of the Revolutionary Political Command - said dissident generals, local media and anti-Chavez groups in the US had plotted the president's removal.

The most reactionary sectors in the United States were also implicated in the conspiracy,' he said.

Reprinted from The Observer Sunday, April 21, 2002



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Plan Puebla-Panama Seeks to Spread NAFTA's Ills South

by David McClure



In March 2001, a band of 24 Mexican revolutionary Zapatista leaders triumphantly made good on their New Year's Day pledge of 1994 that they would one day collectively march on Mexico City. Significantly, they did so not through a suicidal armed insurrection, but through brilliant and skilled tactical organizing.

On the day that the Zapatista march from Chiapas to Mexico City reached the state of Puebla, Mexican President Vicente Fox was in Cancún, Mexico addressing business leaders at the 2001 World Economic Forum. The key issue on the agenda: a new neoliberal offensive designed to promote economic globalization in Mexico and Central America.

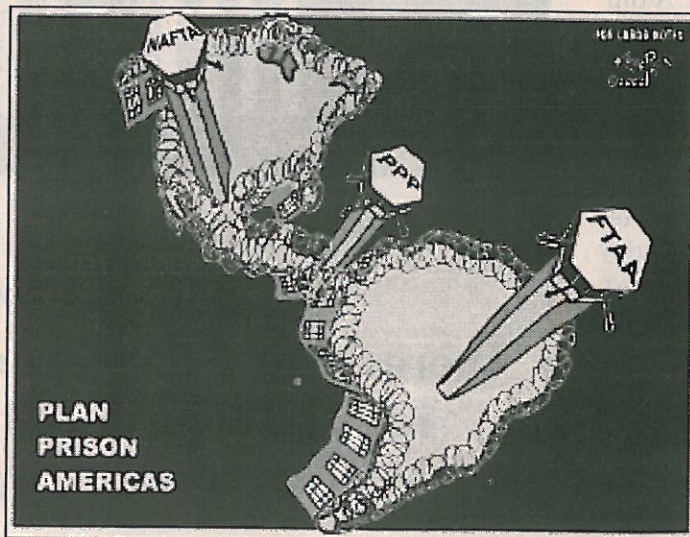
Considered the major project to propel Fox's new National Development Plan, Plan Puebla-Panama (PPP) was unveiled internationally on June 16th at an El Salvador summit. All seven Central American heads of state signed on to the project, which encompasses a region of 102 million square kilometers and 63 million citizens.

Masking as Fox's answer to underdevelopment in regions suffering high levels of poverty and marginalization, PPP aims to integrate trade, infrastructure, and biological corridors from the southern tip of Panama through the state of Puebla, Mexico. But behind the official discourse of prosperity and opportunity lurks the specter of economic imperialism in an area of strategic importance for the U.S. export industry and neoliberal economic policies.

Central American) region. Journalist Carlos Fazio believes that PPP is intended to weaken the Zapatista movement and other organized Mayan groups in southern Mexico and Guatemala.

PPP includes plans for new highways, rail lines, sea-ports, and airports, hydroelectric projects, irrigation infrastructure, biotechnology, export agriculture, telecommunication lines, and oil pipelines. Plans are underway in Guatemala's Quiché and Petén departments for dam construction, major highway construction to the Chiapas Border, and mineral excavation. These "development" projects threaten to uproot indigenous communities.

PPP seeks to take advantage of the region's cheap labor. The corridor will be lined with more than 90 new *maquilas* (industrial factories) this year alone, providing jobs for an estimated 37,000 *campesinos* (small-scale farm workers) recently dislocated as a result of the severe drop of prices of produce, especially corn, since the removal of agricultural tariffs mandated by



As currently envisioned, PPP would accelerate land privatization, displace indigenous people and turn them into factory workers, and destroy natural habitats throughout the Mesoamerican (Mexican and

the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Many tax-free *maquila* plants in northern Mexico have recently begun threatening to leave, citing high costs of production, excessive regulation, and increasing labor costs. Salaries in the southern indigenous states of Mexico are on average 40% lower than those in the north, and the companies locating there are assured generous subsidies and substandard regulation. Many parts of Central America are even more enticing to business, as pay is lower and environmental and labor regulations are weaker.

The region included in PPP, especially the land stretching between Oaxaca and Guatemala, is economically impoverished but rich in natural resources. Southern Mexico's Lacandón Jungle and Guatemala's Petén and northern Quiché departments host impressive biodiversity. Mesoamerica has bountiful untapped petroleum assets and 34 million hectares of virgin timber (317,000 of which have already been devastated in the state of Oaxaca). According to the Center for Economic Research and Political

Community Action, the Lacandón area alone hosts 50% of Mexico's species of tropical trees. PPP would wreak havoc on the area's complex and rich ecosystems.

The project would include mineral and petrochemical excavation sites and industrial shrimp and eucalyptus farms. Eucalyptus, used as pulpwood for paper factories, is a non-indigenous tree infamous

PPP would accelerate land privatization, displace indigenous people and turn them into factory workers, and destroy natural habitats throughout Mesoamerica.

for wiping out native species. Large-scale shrimp farms would cultivate non-native species from Asia, not only driving local shrimp fishers out of business but also potentially infecting local shrimp populations with foreign invasive diseases.

At the same time, southern Mexican water sources, which compromise 30% of Mexico's total water supply, are in grave danger from PPP. Seventy-one sites for new dams in Chiapas alone have been lo-

cated, mostly in Zapatista autonomous zones. Work will soon begin on two hydroelectric dams in Guerrero.

PPP sets to transform the crumbling, 25-year-old harbor Puerto Madero in Chiapas into a regional gateway and a free-trade zone for fisheries. Despite Fox's claim that this development project is meant to improve health and educational services in the surrounding indigenous communities, it would in fact facilitate the export of *maquila* items and natural resources and increase the import of mass-produced goods.

The Fox administration holds a tight relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and has developed a reputation for successfully promoting global capitalism in Mexico. A mere 90 days after the June 16 signing, the World Bank and IMF assured their financial support and investment plans for PPP. On July 25, the Inter-American Development Bank announced US \$21.8 million worth of financing for the El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras region of the project. Representatives of multilateral lending agencies designated more aid from the United Nations Development Program, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, and the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean. Private bank and lending institutions as well as individual private investors from the United States, Japan, Norway, Germany, and Spain will be providing funding as well. The grand total to date of promised funding for PPP has reached US\$10 billion.

See PPP, p. 29



Brazilian *Quilombos* Face Expulsion

by Louise Silberling

On Brazil's Northeast Atlantic coast, in Alcântara, Maranhão, nearly 3,500 Afro-Brazilians are soon to be involuntarily relocated from their traditional communities, or *quilombos*. They will be replaced by the United States military and commercial ventures including companies such as Lockheed Martin, Orbital Sciences, Rockwell International and Boeing, and military and commercial representatives from other nations. The *quilombo* communities are struggling to hold on to their land, and support for their struggle comes from a range of sources, including elements of the Brazilian judiciary and the Organization of American States.

On April 18, 2000, the U.S. signed a bilateral agreement with Brazil, negotiating the lease of the Alcântara Launch Base in the state of Maranhão. Under the Technical Safeguards Agreement, access to the site will be limited to those with U.S. military-issued photo identification tags. The agreement was modified this fall by the Brazilian Congress, and it will return to the U.S. for renegotiation prior to final implementation. The impending U.S. lease of the base, combined with the wide array of international military and commercial interests coming into play there, have created pressure to remove the peninsula's residents.

The communities of the Alcântara peninsula are descendants of *quilombos*, some of which have existed since the



late 1500's. *Quilombo* communities throughout Brazil have a unique culture, and their land rights are protected under Brazilian Law. In Alcântara, *quilombos* have resisted removal for twenty years—first when the launch base was established by the Brazilian dictatorship, and now by international military and industrial interests and their own government agencies, including the Brazilian environmental agency (IBAMA) and the Brazilian aeronautic agency (Infraero).

The Brazilian aeronautic ministry denies that the local population is comprised of *quilombos*, and the environmental impact statement it is trying to pass ignores the existence of any communities at all. Apparently, traditional populations are invisible in the face of the billions of dollars to be made in the rocket and satellite launching business. Residents of the region have been concerned for years about botched missile, rocket, and satellite launches which frequently explode and

send debris over a wide area.

A small group of Brazilian activists, unionists, attorneys, and academics have banded together to stop approval of the illegal environmental impact statement. They have also attracted the attention of Brazil's Office of the Attorney General, which has opened a public inquiry into the irregularities of the occupation of the Alcântara Launch Base.

By limiting access to the project area, the Brazil-U.S. Accord threatens to cut off access to all outsiders, including researchers who have been working in the area for years. The Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA) voted a repudiatory motion was against the Accord in 2000, and in 2001 the American Anthropological Association (AAA) teamed up with ABA to pursue an inquiry on the accord with the U.S. Congress and State Department.

After years of tensions and conflicts with the government, more than three hundred families were removed from the

Louise Silberling is a graduate student in the Rural Sociology Department at Cornell University.

launch base area between 1986 and 1987. Resettlement into another location will be tantamount to cultural genocide for the people of Alcântara. The Brazilian Government has not yet compensated these families, many of whom left their traditional lifestyles to live in the city of São Luis. After being "resettled" into barracks owned by the aeronautic ministry, these families are not allowed to make improvements on their houses, and their means of subsistence is greatly diminished. The *quilombo* communities traditionally survive from fishing, gathering, and planting on a largely subsistence basis.

Resettlement also places further stress on the resource base of the 266 traditional communities already living in the targeted resettlement areas. Rural communities are completely dependent on the resource base, which is a fragile and richly complex ecological and cultural landscape requiring a low population density and careful resource management.

Relations between the *quilombo* communities inside and outside of the base constitute a complex web of culturally and economically interdependent relationships.

U.S. companies and other corporations prize the Alcântara Launch Base in large part due to its proximity to the equator. Companies such as Lockheed Martin, Orbital Sciences, Rockwell International, and Boeing have visited the site and are considering rocket and satellite launches in the near future. Their interest in the site has grown since the implementation of the Technical Safeguards Agreement, in which the Brazilian government safeguards the technology of foreign companies who wish to do business in the Alcântara launch base. The U.S. has been discussing leasing the base since at least 1996, and NASA has been cooperating in launches from the Alcântara site since at least 1995. Brazil has been cooperating with China, Russia, the Ukraine, and France in recent

years for launch and missile technology. Current Russian and Ukrainian deals with Brazil allow for use of converted ICBMs, which could be re-armed in the future, although in 1995 Brazil became a signatory to the Missile Technology Control Regime, or MTCR, an international nonproliferation treaty.

Powerful national and international interests have lined up the *quilombo* communities of the Alcântara Peninsula. At the request of seven human rights NGO's, the Organization of American States considered the case of human rights violations against the *quilombo* communities, and formally asked Brazil to respond to these violations. The Brazilian judiciary is investigating claims of the *quilombo* communities. Meanwhile, the Brazilian Congress reviewed the Technical Safeguards Agreement this year, and will send it back to the United States for renegotiation. It is now a propitious time to raise our voices of concern for the people of Alcântara.

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Colombian Peace Process Collapses



by Martin Dayani

*Reprinted from
Latinamerica Press 3/11/02*

Over the past three years, Colombians have become accustomed to periodic headlines announcing that the peace talks were "on the verge of collapse." On February 21, however, when President Andrés Pastrana finally ended negotiations, the front pages simply stated, "It's Over."

The immediate reason for ending the much-criticized peace process was the hijacking of a civilian airliner in southern Colombia and the kidnapping of a senator who was on board.

Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels took over the plane soon after takeoff and ordered the pilot to make a dangerous landing on a road that they had blocked earlier. They then abducted Sen. Jorge Gechen and released the other passengers.

Pastrana angrily denounced the incident, taking the country by surprise with his announcement that he had decided to end the peace talks.

The president immediately revoked the large demilitarized zone ceded to the FARC in 1998 as a condition for peace talks, withdrew the group's "political status" and reactivated arrest warrants for all guerrilla leaders, which had been suspended during the negotiations.

He also displayed aerial photographs apparently showing clandestine runways and other facilities that the rebels had constructed inside their safe haven.

Later that night, Air Force jets and attack helicopters bombed dozens of targets in the zone, including encampments, weapon storage facilities, fuel depots, and clandestine airstrips.

Pastrana's quick decision was largely unexpected in a country accustomed to hijackings, high-profile kidnappings, car bombs and other violent acts by the rebels.

The president had consistently resisted pressure to end the talks, which were widely seen as fruitless. Pastrana's willingness to accommodate the FARC's repeated provocations had prompted many Colombians to say openly that he was a victim of his own "political naiveté."

The FARC had continued their military offensive during the three years of negotiations, stripping the peace process of credibility (*LP*, Oct. 22, 2001).

Appreciating the importance of military power, the rebels had ignored all calls for a cease-fire. Constant attacks on provincial towns, continued kidnappings — including the high-profile abduction and killing of politicians — and attacks on the country's energy and petroleum infrastructure had gained the rebels a reputation as war mon-

gers lacking a real interest in a negotiated settlement. On March 2, the body of Liberal Party Sen. Martha Catalina Daniels was found about 60 kilometers northwest of Bogotá. Officials blamed the FARC for her murder. She was the seventh legislator killed in the past four years.

"The FARC want to bring the state and Colombian society to their knees and force us to succumb to their acts of terror," Colombian armed forces commander Gen. Fernando Tapias said. "They want to take power and install their version of a Marxist dictatorship. ... But the state and Colombian society will never be defeated by terror."

It was the FARC's growing military might that opened the door to negotiations, on their own terms, in 1998. If they had



not grown enough to pose a real threat, the government would never have made a serious attempt at negotiation. The guerrillas also considered violence their main instrument for pressuring the government to grant concessions during the peace process.

But public opinion, which had turned against the FARC as the peace process dragged on and violence continued, became even more negative after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Colombian Army commanders, quickly taking advantage of the new international climate, began to compare the FARC to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

For Pastrana, the shift in international opinion made the talks increasingly untenable. In a nationally televised address on February 21, the president compared the hijacking to last year's terrorist attacks in the United States.

"The FARC themselves have chosen to be seen as a ter-

rorist group," Pastrana said. The rebel group now faces increasing political and diplomatic isolation at home and abroad.

During the talks, FARC commanders had accompanied government officials on tours of

Colombian Army commanders, quickly taking advantage of the new international climate after the September 11, began to compare the FARC to the Taliban and Al Qaeda.

European capitals, giving the rebels unprecedented and valuable political exposure. In Colombia, rebel commanders were treated like statesmen, conversing with senior UN and European Community diplomats inside the demilitarized zone (LP, Jan. 28, 2002).

Now, however, the diplomatic doors are slamming shut.

After the talks broke down, it was made known that the Mexican government would

probably withdraw the visas of FARC spokesmen who have operated an office for years in Mexico City. Since Sept. 11, it has also been reported that most European countries would not grant new visas to FARC representatives or delegates. The British ambassador in Bogotá echoed US rhetoric, branding the FARC a "terrorist" organization.

In contrast, over the past three years Pastrana has rebuilt Colombia's shattered reputation in the international community, leaving behind the image of a country on the verge of becoming a "narco-democracy."

The most tangible result of his efforts was the approval of US\$1.3-billion emergency military aid package, known as "Plan Colombia," under former U.S. President Bill Clinton (1993-2001) (LP, Oct. 16, 2000). The current U.S. administration of President George W. Bush is likely to increase military aid.

Continued on p. 19

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Wither Terror and Why: Snorting the World Through Yanqui Noses

By Jason Marti

"I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All of this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally."

--Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, weeks before he was killed by US trained and advised death squads on March 24, 1980. He was shot while saying Mass in his church the day after he had demanded that the Salvadoran military stop the repression.

If the U.S. continues to lie and to slither along hugging the moral low-ground in South America - then as with the Middle East - terror will eventually visit the US from the south. South Americans know that the U.S. uses the smoke-screens of the War on Drugs/Terrorism/Market Barriers as a cover for its efforts to dominate the region. Do U.S. citizens understand how arrogant and hypocritical their government appears?

If there were a market for morality, the U.S. moral currency would need to be devalued drastically. The U.S. creates the drug problems of the world through its uncaring domestic policies and a culture of escapism that goes hand-in-

hand with its rapid (and rabid), materialistic, soul-less economic growth - for which it is envied around the world. The almost seven million people in prison or in other programs of the US correctional system (almost half the population of Ecuador or a fifth of Colombia) are a testament to the severe social disintegration and structural repression which

bian military, Fujimori and Montesinos in Peru, and Mennen of Argentina? All of these groups have received money, arms, and training from the U.S. and all of them are involved in drugs, terrorism, and corruption. There are many more examples to choose from.

This immoral policy of the U.S. has failed and now some of these groups have turned on their master - though many are still its friend.

Neoliberalism and globalization have accelerated the worldwide collapse of commodity prices that drives poor farmers to grow drug crops in order to survive. Does the U.S. think that it can have low prices, bankrupt farmers, high demand for drugs, and give billions in money, weapons and intelligence to brutal regimes without any guns being turned in the direction of the U.S.? Immorality and extreme arrogance can not last indefinitely - even if the American public is kept ignorant.

U.S. drug use is not only creating terrorism, repression, social chaos, and wars, it is destroying some of the most biologically important habitats in the world. "Colombian farmers, facing a 52 percent decline in coffee prices since 1997, are tearing out their coffee plants and replanting with opium and coca, just as Afghan farmers have replaced wheat and other crops. As a result, the chemicals dumped into



makes the U.S. "work".

The tens of millions of drug addicts and heavy drug users in the U.S. now threaten the world and the biodiversity of the Earth. When will the world put the U.S. on trial for its involvement in drug trafficking and its support of terrorism - both in Afghanistan (the Taliban and Northern Alliance), Pakistan Intelligence, the AUC and the Colom-

Continued from p. 18

lakes and rivers from drug refining poses a horrific ecological threat. Colombia estimates that each year the amount of chemicals poured into its Amazon basin from poppy and coca labs equals the harmful effects of three Exxon Valdez oil spills (Vanity Fair, March 2002)."

The same is true in Peru where the New York Times and the UN report an increase in coca cultivation - though the U.S. denied these reports in order to avoid listing Peru as a country not cooperating in the drug war and therefore ineligible for US aid. Oil pipelines

(carrying the number one US drug addiction - fossil fuels) in Ecuador and Colombia are also frequently attacked or leak from landslides and earthquakes. All of these adverse effects, along with spraying of millions of acres with herbicides in Colombia and massive US funded development of the Amazon in Brazil are certain to destroy the "Lungs of the Earth" and the species and indigenous people who live in the Amazon basin.

Many U.S. citizens are not high on drugs. This essay is offered as friendly advice and as a general warning that everything must change and soon if

catastrophe is to be avoided. The U.S. has to legalize drug use and spend ten times what is currently spent on drug treatment, education, and crop substitution. The WTO, FTAA, and the whole concept of corporate globalization have to be discarded.

Starting from scratch citizens of the world can come together to build a new world based on sustainability, mutual aid and respect, human rights, and real democracy.

Contact the Ecosolidarity Working Group at: bolivarno@hotmail.com

Colombia, cont'd from p. 17

Pastrana's decision to end the peace process was widely backed by the international community. At home, opinion polls indicated that about 90 percent of Colombians backed his decision. Leading candidates for the May presidential elections also expressed support.

Liberal Party Sen. Germán Vargas Lleras went further, criticizing Pastrana's willingness to keep the talks going for three years despite the lack of visible results.

"I really don't understand why the President took so long to recognize that the peace process was not going anywhere and that the FARC are a terrorist group with strong links to drug trafficking," he said.

Vargas also ridiculed Pastrana's presentation of photos showing FARC activities inside the demilitarized zone, saying that he had presented the same evidence at a congressional hearing in October.

While the FARC issued a statement saying that they were still "committed to a negotiated solution" and were willing to resume talks with the next govern-

ment, they immediately stepped up their sabotage campaign, causing blackouts in many parts of the country.

In a later statement, the rebels blamed the collapse of the peace talks on the political oligarchy's unwillingness to make political concessions in favor of poor Colombians. The FARC also blamed US pressure.

But even as the conflict intensifies, there is consensus that the only long-term solution lies in a new peace process sometime in the future.

"There is no military solution, as neither side is capable

of defeating the other," said leftist Sen. Antonio Navarro Wolf.

Any future peace process is unlikely to resemble the recently collapsed talks, however, as a new government will probably be unwilling to sanction a new demilitarized safe haven for the rebels.

New attempts to negotiate peace will be shaped by what happens in the military arena, and many politicians are banking on a continued strengthening of the armed forces and military weakening of the FARC to force the rebels to negotiate.



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REMOVE THE MOTE IN OUR OWN EYE: HELP CLOSE OUR OWN TERRORIST TRAINING CAMP

by Ed Kinane

Since the vicious and compounded horrors of September 11, US citizens have been forced to a heightened intimacy with "terrorism." It has come home with a vengeance and in a manner hitherto unimaginable.

Since that dark morning the word "terrorist" has been the media's mantra. While indisputably apt in this instance, the word is nonetheless loaded. Except rarely, it's only applied to "them," to the other, to non-Caucasians.

The beauty of this cognitive trick is that it keeps us from asking why September 11 happened. It keeps us from asking why the U.S. government and economic system -- for these were the targets -- are intensely and widely hated on this bleeding planet. It keeps us from seeing how central terrorism is to U.S. foreign policy and to our commercial expansion.

Since August 6th and August 9th, 1945, terrorism -- or civilian-targeted warfare has been central to U.S. military. It's been central to our nuclear threats -- both in explicit -- against those who defy imperial will. It's been central to our contempt for international and treaty obligations. It's been central to our small arms and big arms export industry. It's been central to our propping up of a slew of totalitarian regimes. It's been central to our invasions of Korea, Southeast Asia, and Iraq. It's been central to our bloody attack on Panama and to our other armed interventions in Latin America. It's been central to our massive training of foreign military, both here and abroad.

Those who care about our country, and yet believe that ultimately

the universe is just, tremble. We knew it was only a matter of time before this malevolence -- this sin -- began coming home to roost. Those whose meta-

phism for anti-worker (rural and urban) warfare. The School of the Americas is the biggest union-buster of them all.

Periodically, in response to new strategic needs, the camp changes its name. In the nineties it won notoriety as the SOA. To evade that stigma, in January 2001 it began calling itself the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC).

Since 1990 a small grassroots, faith-based, organization called SOA Watch has struggled to expose and close the SOA--whatever it is called. Every year on the weekend after November 16 we hold a Vigil Action at the entrance to Ft. Benning. Our vigil actions are liturgical and scrupulously nonviolent. Nonetheless, over the years 70 SOA Watchers have been prosecuted and sent to federal prison. The crime? Walking onto Ft. Benning and daring to say, "The Emperor wears no clothes."

Besides these prisoners of conscience, many thousands come to Benning every November who don't risk arrest. These, by their very presence, eloquently protest the continued operation of the SOA.

Last November 10,000 people attended the Vigil Action at Fort Benning, Georgia. For U.S. citizens, there are few better ways to oppose terrorism than actively advocate for the close of schools of America. Please join us in our struggle.

For more information, check the SOA Watch website, <<http://www.sow.org>> Ed, a former prisoner of conscience based in Syracuse, is on the SOA Watch national board.

THE POWER OF LANGUAGE



Terror: violence promoted by a group to achieve or maintain supremacy.

Terrorism: the systematic use of terror, violence, and intimidation to achieve an end.

physics derive from the street know that what goes around comes around. Those with Eastern spirituality call it *karma*.

Since 1946, the U.S. has harbored Latin American terrorists and has run a terrorist training camp, first in Panama and, since 1984, at Ft. Benning, Georgia. The camp has taught anti-insurgency warfare to over 60,000 Latin American soldiers. Anti-insurgency warfare is a euphemism for civilian-targeted warfare. It's also a eu-

Global Village Confronts the SOA

by Aubryn Sidle



This past November, thousands of people converged in Columbus, Georgia to demand the closure of the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC), formerly known as the School of the Americas.

Despite fears of mass arrest and low turnout due to recent legislation threatening to all but destroy citizens' right to demonstrate, we marched in front of the gates of Ft. Benning, nearly 10,000 strong. People came bearing crosses, flowers, signs, coffins and their love in a mass funeral procession to commemorate the deaths of all those slaughtered by WHISC graduates. The energy in the air was palpable as the names of the victims were read aloud. People walked in silence crying, clearly moved by the endless repetition of name and age, name and age, name and age: women, men, children, toddlers, infants and grandparents. Jolted back to reality by a mass requiem of murdered innocents, it suddenly it becomes incredibly ludicrous (if it wasn't already) to even consider government claims that "human rights" is central to the WHISC curriculum. In a country whose main concern is fighting off terrorism in other places, the United States continues a long legacy of hypocrisy by using citizens' tax dollars to sponsor and train terrorists within its own borders.

With this injustice in mind, people from across the country came together to form an affinity group focused around a high risk action that would allow activists to carry out jail

solidarity tactics if and when arrested. The hope was that non-cooperation once inside the legal system would allow the group to negotiate a low sentencing precedent that would influence the outcome of arrests in coming years.

After intense consensus meetings to determine the exact nature of the action, activists decided to construct a model of what they wanted the world to look like—and to build it out of cardboard boxes, dirt, paint, and recycled garbage in the road blocking the gates of Ft. Benning. The newly gated entrance of the base prevented the traditional mass exodus of demonstrators onto federal property; and it had contributed to the diminishing numbers of the affinity group. As a result, the decision was made to risk arrest on state property. The smaller resource base of the state system would make the chances for jail solidarity success higher.

On the day of the protest, 33 demonstrators carried their supplies to the front of the gates. Immersed in swarms of people, they went to work building what they called "The Global Village." People of all ages and walks of life joined in building their visions and dreams for the future on the concrete in the shadow of WHISC. I watched a three-year-old meticulously

fingerprint the outside of an old refrigerator--red paint and a grin smeared across his face. A group of college students rebuilt the World Trade Center out of boxes. Someone painted a bed of roses on an old mattress, while a mother made a 'free hospital.' An older woman brought food and a group planted a flower garden and cardboard cornfield with buckets of dirt.

As the permit ended and people started to disperse, the Global Village activists sat down in their newly constructed home—holding vigil at the gates of Ft. Benning as police began to assemble. For nearly three hours the group sat in a circle roasting marshmallows and singing, or being sung to by the crowd there in solidarity with the affinity group. Carrying puppets, people began circling the fire singing "you are not alone" to the tune of "We Shall Overcome." The beauty of the action was that it never once escalated to panic, or anger, and definitely not violence, even after a police squad assembled (in full riot gear carrying rubber-bullet guns) to drag the protestors away.

The integrity of this action and the strength of those involved was indicative of the SOA movement. Thousands of people assemble once a year at Ft. Benning precisely because they are tired of violence. Still very much connected to religious faith, the SOA movement carries with it a legacy of pacifism. The fact that WHISC and Ft. Benning can be directly challenged by peaceful actions like the Global Village is testimony to the power of the

Continued on p. 23

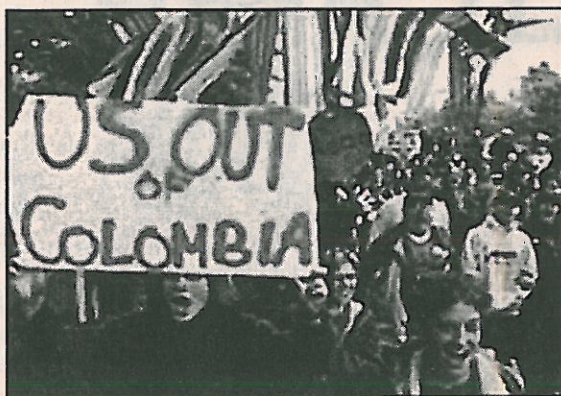
Colombia Mobilization, April 2002

Thousands Converge on Washington, DC to Demand Peace and Global Justice!

In a historic weekend in Washington, DC, over 75,000 people including more than 100 Ithacans gathered in the name of global justice to speak out against deadly U.S. policies. Voices rang out for justice on many fronts: to call for an end to the alleged "War on Terrorism"; to demand justice for Palestinians; to order an end to corporate globalization; and to demand a change in U.S. foreign policy to Colombia and to close to the US-terrorist training school, the School of the Americas. The different messages of each event came from a common thread: the desire to create a new world where global and domestic policies are rooted in humanity, not power, and people, not profits.

CUSLAR and the Ithaca Catholic Worker sent over 50 people in vans and cars to DC to participate in the Colombia Mobilization, a series of events organized by a coalition of organizations including SOA Watch, Witness for Peace, and the Colombia Support Network. The weekend of April 19-22 proved that the movement to close the SOA and to demand justice in Latin America is stronger

than ever. Despite the often-torrential rainfall, thousands came for the weekend's events that included rallies, lobbying, teach-ins, and skill trainings. The Tompkins County Network for Peace and Justice also ar-



Liz Carlisle protests US military involvement in Colombia, Washington, DC, April 2002

anged transportation for over 50 others to attend Saturday's events including the largest pro-Palestinian demonstration in this country's history.

The Colombia Mobilization culminated in a solidarity march in which 3,000 protesters marched on the Capitol in a peaceful demonstration calling for a non-militarized U.S. policy toward Colombia. The unper-

mitted march began at 7:30 am near the Washington Monument and processed up the Mall and into the streets leading to the Capitol Building. Marchers encountered police on motorcycles and horses blockading the streets along the route yet the march continued, flowing around the obstacles.

Upon reaching the Capitol Building, the mass continued on to Upper Senate Park for a joyous, permitted rally while several small groups struggled through police lines with another agenda. Individual affinity groups attempted to blockade two separate entrances to the Capitol Building. Surrounded by hundreds of police, tourists, frustrated commuters, and cheering supporters, 37 people were arrested for obstructing vehicular access to the Capitol. Among those arrested were three Ithacans, Aubryn Sidle, Liz Carlisle, and Marcie Ley. Formal charges were filed against Sidle, Carlisle, and Ley, who must later return to Washington to stand trial for their action. All three view their arrest and impending trial as an opportunity to raise awareness about the situation in Colombia.

"We are here on behalf of the millions of Colombians who have no voice in the US but who suffer daily because of the repression perpetrated by US trained and funded soldiers," says Sidle, 19, an Ithaca native and Cornell student who was also arrested in Fort Benning, Georgia last year for demonstrating against the School of the Americas. "As U.S. citizens our responsibility is to see that our government withdraws its support for a military known to have committed massacres

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Colombia Mobilization cont'd

and human rights abuses on its own citizens."

Organizers and participants hoped that by disrupting rush-hour traffic on the streets of DC and into the Capitol Building they would draw attention to the U.S. role in the Colombian conflict and persuade Congressional representatives to direct aid away from military spending. "Rather than sending money to Colombia to purchase weapons and helicopters made by U.S. defense contractors, we demand that foreign aid be used to stimulate the peace process and a sustainable economy," adds Ley, the coordinator of CUSLAR.

Despite the jovial nature of the act of civil disobedience, participants were aware of the somber reality felt by most Colombians. "Our government sends billions of dollars in military aid to Colombia which only escalates an already violent conflict," reports Carlisle, 21, a student at Cornell University and president of the CUSLAR. "The majority of the victims are not armed guerrillas but civilians. Over 20 innocent people are killed each day."

The thousands that participated in the weekend's events testified to the power and the growth of the peace movement. Thousands came from all over the Hemisphere to stand in solidarity: in solidarity with the people of Colombia who have had death and destruction brought upon them due to careless, inhumane foreign policies of the United States; in solidarity with the millions who have had their lives and way of life destroyed by the graduates of the U.S. terrorist training school, the SOA; and in solidarity with one another, to prove to the rest of the world that the United States is not united behind the dirty war that is being waged by the Bush Administration—not in Colombia, not in Afghanistan; not in Palestine, not in Venezuela. Capitol Hill reverberated with the voice of the people, declaring that a new world is being created and that we will not stop until justice prevails. *La lucha sigue.*

Global Village cont'd from p. 21

movement. All of the protestors in Columbus this year, including the Global Village activists, insisted on transforming the ugliness of militarism into the beauty of peaceful defiance and political dissent. From the processional that created a memorial out of the gates of a military base, to the activists who stood their ground and remained non-violent in the face of a riot squad, the entire weekend was one of transformation.

Later, the 33 arrestees were taken to Muscogee County Jail where they spent over 48 hours practicing jail solidarity. They fasted, chanted, sang, and refused to give their identities until reaching a plea with Muscogee County Justice Haywood Turner. Clearly moved by the events, Turner, in an unprecedented act, left the bench during the court proceedings to converse eye-to-eye with the activists. In the end, 33 people practicing jail solidarity managed to plea three misdemeanors down to two, receiving handwritten comments from the judge on all their records testifying to the non-violence of their actions, and completely bypassing what could have been a 9 month jail sentence. In a refreshing display of compassion, Judge Turner dropped the charge of Unlawful Assembly asserting his belief in the



importance of maintaining our constitutional rights in the face of the present political climate.

So what did it accomplish? Many of us believe that the Global Village action will pave the way for a much larger solidarity action to be conducted next year on federal property. A future action could create the opportunity to set a new sentencing precedent for those arrested on the base—knocking down the traditional six-month penalty. At the risk of sounding idealistic I think that at the very least the builders of the Global Village managed to give a momentary sense of freedom to all who stood in front of Ft. Benning while the demonstration was still in full swing. Surrounded by people's model cardboard dreams, chanting, "This is what democracy looks like," I know that I felt truly empowered. And it is precisely that feeling of empowerment that builds movements and creates change.

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Chile:

Basis for the Future, Living off the Past

Ann H. Peters

Chile is the ultimate example of the "neoliberal model" and has been touted as a demonstration of the success of that model. Highly integrated into world markets, with a government which has abdicated most regulatory functions and sold off public services, Chile today is a nation-state with little ability to ensure a minimal quality of life for its citizens. As we watch the current economic collapse in Argentina, it is helpful to review the rise of the policies and social and economic relationships of the neighbor state that provided the model implemented in Argentina, and to consider the current state of the Chilean economy and society.

The Southern Cone Region

Like Argentina, Chile has a history and an economy that do not fit within a stereotypical vision of the "third world." In many ways, the Southern Cone region is more similar to North America than to the parts of the Americas within the tropical core of our hemisphere. These modern nation-states were built on usurpation

of the lands of their native nations, particularly the Diaguita and Mapuche peoples, the creation of grain belts and cattle ranches, mining and forestry, a vigorous participation in the Industrial Revolution, and the transformation of agriculture into agro-business.

After World War II, as the United States tried to consolidate diplomatic and economic influence worldwide and especially in the Americas, the Southern Cone nations tried to manage their own development and balance relations between East and West. In the 1960s, President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress and CIA interventions set the margins for regional self-determination. In the early 1970's Chile and Argentina, like others, participated in the non-aligned movement, looked to Castro's Cuba for alternative political leadership, and incorporated elements of socialism in defining the relationship between the state, the national economy, and the needs and aspirations of their citizens.

These efforts were cancelled by military coups in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, followed by campaigns of human rights violations which included coordination among the anti-subversion campaigns in the three countries in the famous "Operation Condor." At the same time, the neoliberal policies advocated by US-trained economists of the "Chicago

School" were implemented in the region. With the return to democratic structures of government throughout the region in the 1990's, national leaders continued to advocate neoliberal policies and carried out privatization of publicly held services and infrastructure.

Chilean Road to Neoliberalism

Through much of the 20th century, Chilean national policies were designed to promote and protect national industrial development. Chile was characterized by a powerful trade union movement and strong state-supported basic education, particularly in urban areas. Rural areas continued to be characterized by a marked social dichotomy between wealthy large landowners and impoverished, often illiterate *campesinos* who lived on and worked the land. Legal steps towards land reform were enacted in the 1960's, but little redistribution occurred. These factors contributed to a rise in political activism in the late 1960's that culminated in the 1970 election of President Salvador Allende in a coalition led by his Socialist Party. Activism by frustrated *campesinos* and organized industrial workers pushed the

Anthropologist Anne Peters is a former CUSLAR Coordinator and is an active member of the CUSLAR Advisory Board.

Allende government to rapidly put into practice land redistributions and the forced purchase of foreign-owned industries. The loss of these extremely profitable ventures led wealthy sectors in Chile and the United States to work together to bring down the Allende government.

The 1999 release of classified U.S. government archives documents the well known involvement of the U.S. government in undermining the Chilean economy and government under Allende and supporting the military coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power in 1973. The ensuing bloodbath of torture, disappearance, assassination, and massive detention of "political" Chileans had world-wide impact, particularly as thousands were released, forced, or allowed to flee into exile.

Less well known is the structural and ideological retooling of Chilean society organized by both military and civilian institutions dominated by the right wing under the Pinochet government. Government institutions, including schools, universities, and public media, were taken over by hand-picked administrators with a mission to change the national culture. A new moral or-

der was forged based on the influences of the national security doctrine of the military, the Opus Dei movement of the Roman Catholic Church and the "Chicago Boys" approach to national economic policy. Private companies, including the major media, collaborated or even took a leadership role in reforging a national ideology based on an extreme version of free market neoliberalism, individualism, and authoritarian rule.

Fruits of Neoliberal Policy

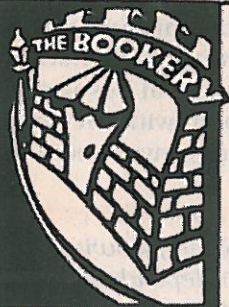
In the course of the 1980's, free market and neoliberal policies were put into practice in Chile. Barriers to trade, tariffs on imports, and restrictions on foreign companies were reduced. Many national industries collapsed, and controlling interests in others were sold to foreign corporations. The economy today is largely based on export of natural resources in the form of mining, agro-forestry, and industrial fishing, at the cost of depletion of soil, water, and marine resources. Chile's great success in exports of fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as in the wine industry, has led to reconcentration of farmland in the hands of large corporations. The lands and water rights of indigenous communi-

ties have been legally redefined as "shares" (*acciones*) that can be sold to outside interests. Skyrocketing indices of air and water pollution, urban sprawl, poverty, and urban decay are now considered products of market regulation rather than problems to be addressed by the state.

Anti-labor legislation and high unemployment have broken the power of the trade unions. Unable to assure workers effective representation in negotiating wages, benefits, pensions or working conditions, unions often act as brokers in administering short-term government programs designed to retrain workers facing job loss as part of cutbacks and privatization. While workers are urged to become small entrepreneurs, a retail industry glutted with cheap imports allows Chileans few opportunities to "make it" competing in small-scale production and commerce. Most workers who accept severance packages with entrepreneurial training create small businesses which fail, a pattern which public media ascribe to a failure to develop the proper entrepreneurial spirit.

In this context of high unemployment and deregulation, abusive labor practices are so common that they are perceived as normal. Companies lay off all their workers to reorganize, and then offer to rehire their experienced team at minimum wage. Newly hired employees are asked to work for a month without pay, as a trial period which may or may not eventually be paid "if they work out." Companies offer sales positions based exclusively on commissions, and thereby hire an unlimited number of "representatives" who desperately promote company products to their friends and families. Employees

Continued...



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Chile, cont'd from p. 25

are expected to provide any sort of personal favor to their supervisor, at any hour, at personal expense, and in degrading circumstances.

Traditional Chilean values of hospitality, solidarity and collective action survive in uneasy coexistence with the new ideologies of individualistic competition. Once a country with a large working class with a relatively high standard of living, Chile today is a country dominated by a middle class whose typical family is struggling to put food on the table and keep up school payments for their children. Ashamed of individual failure, most Chileans struggle to keep up appearances and suffer internally from stress, denial, and depression. The avid consumerism of the new national culture is fed by out-of-control cycles of personal credit and debt, while certification by the national credit bureau is required for any person who wishes to open a checking account or apply for a job.

The centralized national education system was dismantled, and public schools have been turned over to local municipalities. National funding is limited to a school voucher system instituted in which a minimal per-pupil payment is extended to both public and private schools. This system has led to a multi-tiered educational system divided by individual

and community wealth, with most schools trapped in deteriorating, overcrowded structures without funding for maintenance, expansion, or renewal. In the nation of Nobel-prize-winning poet and schoolteacher Gabriela Mistral, teachers are today overworked, underpaid, and unable to provide the attention to learning for which Chile was famous in the past. Computers distributed by the government in a well-publicized program sit unused, as schools cannot afford personnel to teach and oversee their use. Even in the public schools, families are forced to pay hundreds of dollars each year for schoolbooks, basic supplies, and programming fees.

Still, education continues to be one of the few growing businesses in Chile today. Chileans place a high value on education, and in an increasingly competitive society families are willing to sacrifice everything to educate their children. Public pressure led to the 1999 Educational Reform, which mandates a longer school day and more interactive teaching/learning, but its implementation has been limited by lack of funding for teacher salaries. Small private schools are created each year promising smaller classes, working computers, and a better learning environment. Faced with unemployment, young people spend extra years at technical schools and universities in search of updated, specialized, or different training. Entrepreneurs hire the unemployed to teach the unemployed classes in business English and computer skills.

The national pension system and health care system have both been privatized. Today Chileans are faced with a multiplicity of packages with different costs and limited benefits, which most cannot afford.

While public health care systems continue to exist, they cannot begin to meet the needs of either the elderly who have the right to benefits or the poor who have no other option. Meanwhile, low wages and soaring unemployment mean that fewer and fewer people can afford health insurance or private health care. Private facilities stand half empty because so few can pay for them, while public facilities are increasingly overcrowded and poorly maintained. While the same doctors and nurses traditionally have worked in both systems, increasing frustration with the quality of care is leading many health professionals to abandon work in the public system.

Today Chile is a society living off the social achievements of national policies that in a previous generation created a strong public infrastructure and a hard-working, relatively well-educated population. Now most Chileans work without viable wages or job security in the hope of some day being better paid – or paid at all. While most people live with a lowered standard of living, they continue to learn the latest technologies and to expect that specialized knowledge, excellent tools and hard work must some day lead to better times. Meanwhile, those who retain economic and political power continue to consume the nation's natural resources and social capital without making a substantial investment in the future.

I thank the following students whose independent study projects (2000-2001) provided detailed, vital testimony and background information on the issues discussed above: Lori Browning, Jane Ivory Ernstthal, Myko Gedutis, Johanna Michaels, Michael Paarlberg, Melinda Spooner, Lisanna Sierra Stamos.



borders

by Ruthann Friedman Carlisle

Tijuana:

High border gates clamp closed
to keep the rabble out.
Papiér maché piggy banks,
molded by little brown hands,
fraying pink and yellow,
pile up on the sunny South side.
Niños eyes peek through the knotholes
their fists raised over head,
crying to El Norte.
Viva la Raza!!



Quetta:

Tight lips hide under black moustaches,
big shaggy beards catch angry spittle.
Islamic mug shots blaze through the night.
Lowland border roads are blocked.
Stacks of ornate rugs,
woven by little brown hands,
pile up on the gloomy East side
of a bombed out Afghani road
Mothers reaching from behind veils
brush flies from their babies faces.

Tiny red white and blue banners
stick out of our car windows,
like fancy cocktail toothpicks,
poke out of little hot dogs.

Ruthann Friedman Carlisle is a student at UCLA and a mother of two college students. Through poetry and song she links economic policy with human suffering.

many of the demands. Yet is also clear that the aims of the movement go well beyond a concern for individual savings. In fact, most *asambleas* have stressed this point. During the most recent *cacerolazos*, many people made clear that they have no bank savings and emphasized that the protest is not about a selfish petite-bourgeoisie only worried about its money. In fact, some *asambleas* have emerged in working class districts of Buenos Aires, where people are not directly affected by the freeze.

The broader and more radical dimensions of this movement are clear in their other main goals. First, a primary demand of the assemblies is the resignation of the Supreme Court, a campaign supported by massive *cacerolazos* on Thursdays that have already forced congress to begin an impeachment process. Second, many *asambleas* have launched boycotts against privatized public companies (especially telephones), which enjoyed extraordinary profits in the 1990s and are held responsible for part of the crisis. Third, the *asambleas* have organized *escraches* (mobilizations and direct actions) against corporate media accused of misinforming the public about the

protests. As a further sign of the radicalization of the *asambleas*, many of them voted for measures that only a few months ago were alien to the vocabulary of most middle-class *porteños*: the nationalization of the banking system and the privatized companies and an open confrontation with the Interna-

This movement is constructing a broader political project with a clear anti-neoliberal ideology, challenging the existing party system, and struggling to impose new forms of democratic participation.

tional Monetary Fund. In sum, despite its internal contradictions, this movement is constructing a broader political project with a clear anti-neoliberal ideology, challenging the existing party system, and struggling to impose new forms of democratic participation.

There is another sign that the changes we are witnessing in Argentina could be profound. Since their very conception, the *asambleas vecinales* began coordinating actions with the *piqueteros*, the movement of the unemployed, which since December have also launched new mobilizations all over the country. This new alliance be-

tween *piquetes* and *cacerolas* coalesced on January 27-28, when over 15,000 *piqueteros* organized an overnight march from the poorer suburbs of Buenos Aires to Plaza de Mayo to demand for one million jobs and protest neoliberal policies. Whereas only a year earlier, a similar march had triggered a lukewarm and even cold welcome among many middle-class *porteños*, this time they were cheered all along their trek. One of the marchers commented: "We encountered a different city." Members of dozens of *asambleas* welcomed the *piqueteros* as they walked through their *barrios*, showed them an enthusiastic support, and provided them with food and water.

Several quotes illustrate the type of collective energy created by this political convergence, unthinkable months ago. A merchant and member of one of the *asambleas* told a group of *piqueteros*: "For us, *vecinos* and merchants, it's an honor to unite the unemployed with the *caceroleros* [...] so that we march together to build a new Argentina." Similarly, one of the *piquetero* leaders addressed the *vecinos* who were welcoming them in the following terms: "The *asambleas* of Buenos Aires and the unemployed have a common enemy. The bankers who stole your savings are the same who left us without jobs. We're fighting so that this obscene model of accumulation is over."

The odds that these new popular movements face are enormous, but these voices, and the collective forces that are behind them, may show that something really big is happening in Argentina. The forces that defend the political and economic status quo, although shaken by the wave of popular unrest sweeping through the country, will not give up without a fight. But on the afternoon of January 28th, a single slogan, repeated over and over in a crowded Plaza de Mayo, sent shivers down the spine of thousands of people: "*Piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola!*": "Pickets and pots, the struggle is one!"



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The PPP is one piece in a broader context of large-scale, western hemispheric, neoliberal economic plans largely impelled by the United States. At the Organization of American States' meeting on June 7th, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell divulge the Concausa Plan that will promote Central American economic integration and the privatization of energy and telecommunication systems, both essential to PPP development. The master plan is the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which is designed to expand the Canada-U.S.-Mexico NAFTA agreement all the way from the northern reaches of Canada to the southern tip of Chile (See *Report on Guatemala*, V.22 N.2).

Another Mexican-born plan, devised to function in conjunction with PPP, is *Plan Sur*. Disclosed by Mexican Interior Secretary Santiago Creel, Plan Sur is a sweeping anti-immigration measure designed to seal off Mexico's southern border with Guatemala in order to keep Central American migrant workers out. The plan is reportedly similar to an unwritten accord of 1989 between then-Presidents Carlos Salinas and George



Bush, which was the first step in sealing the NAFTA negotiations. In 2000 alone, Mexico shipped 120,000 migrants back to Guatemala; Plan Sur is expected to double the deportations. In order for PPP to enable companies to benefit from cheap labor, border militarization and containment of workers in the Central American region are paramount.

The PPP corridor of resistance is already gathering steam. Passionately denouncing PPP as a "revised project of savage colonization," 250 representatives from 109 *campesino*, environmental, indigenous, women's and labor organizations from six countries joined together in May 2001 at the *Foro Tapachula* in order to organize a campaign of resistance and develop alternatives. A follow-up Forum in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas drew 500 participants from 190 organizations in 15 countries.

Twenty thousand teachers went on strike in June in Chiapas, their main demand a moratorium on PPP funding.

The Zapatista commanders have vehemently opposed the PPP. "We've decided. We reject it completely. We won't take their herbicides or

fertilizers. We won't work in their factories."

On November 22-24, over 800 representatives from 300 organizations from throughout the Americas converged in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala under the banner "Globalization: People Come First" to present joint strategies and tactics to combat PPP. The "Xelaju Declaration" crafted at the forum asserts, "However it is analyzed, [PPP] is a project that goes against the sovereignty of our countries and the self-determination of our peoples." Delegates agreed to coordinate their struggles for alternative, sustainable, and equitable forms of community and regional development.

Perhaps the silver lining of the impending PPP cloud is the opportunity to link pan-Mayan, indigenous diaspora, *campesino*, women's, labor, and environmental groups and thus to strengthen the multi-faceted anti-globalization and pro-democracy movements of Mesoamerica. Zapatista leader Marcos has stated, "There is an indigenous population, there are workers, there are neighbors, there are teachers, there are students who will disturb the process of 'North Americanization.'"



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