

# NACLA

## REPORT ON THE AMERICAS

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# REINVENTING



# SOLIDARITY

PLUS:

STATE-SPONSORED TERROR IN COLOMBIA

DISCORD AMONG THE SANDINISTAS



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On the cover: Color mural: *Labor Solidarity Has No Borders*, by Mike Alewitz, 1990, is a project of the Labor Art and Mural Project at the Labor Education Center at Rutgers University (photo: M. Cortez). In the background are various solidarity graphics courtesy of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics, Los Angeles.

# REINVENTING SOLIDARITY



Over its 28-year history, NACLA has been absorbed by the question of how progressive activists in North America can act in solidarity with their counterparts in Latin America and the Caribbean. From its inception, NACLA has been pursuing the kinds of investigative questions useful to solidarity activists: What kinds of relations and institutions shape the contours of exploitation and oppression in the Americas? Why are U.S.-Latin American relations structured the way they are? How can we intervene to change those structures and relations? In this report, we

decided to step back and examine the question of solidarity itself. At this moment when the globalization of capital has given North-South solidarity such special urgency, we thought it was time to critically examine the nature and history of progressive solidarity, and to look toward its future.

Solidarity—the fellowship arising from shared struggle—is as old as the human community. Solidarity across national borders is probably as old as those borders. People of similar backgrounds, religions or political ideals—or simply in similar circumstances—have long made common cause with one another across borders. In the most genuine kinds of solidarity, groups have respected one another's differences and autonomy. In other cases, groups have followed vanguards, or dominated weaker groups thought less able to chart their own course. While all human beings are deserving of protection and support, solidarity is neither charity nor the formal protection of rights. As Margaret Keck elucidates, solidarity—whether among trade unionists in a common industry, or sanctuary activists in the U.S. Southwest sheltering Central American refugees—involves a sense of common struggle and, to some degree, common risk. It is based on the conviction that an injury to one is an injury to all.

International solidarity has always had to contend with difficulties of a logistical nature—how to make common cause with people who speak a different language, who are physically far away, and who might not share the same cultural references or values. In the case of pan-American solidarity, activists must also contend with North-South asymmetries. Some have claimed solidarity between activists in the United States and Latin America is solidarity in name only, disguising an inherently unequal relationship. Others have chastised Northern activists for diverting attention from the problems of oppression and injustice within their own societies.

But in today's age of instantly mobile capital and the global division of labor, North-South asymmetries have been offset by important convergences. Just as a variety of "superhighways" are making North-South interaction more practicable, it is now absolutely essential. International solidarity has become a necessary extension of national solidarity. Never has it been so clear that urban and rural workers, the marginal poor, microentrepreneurs, and even many professionals—whether in California or Peru—are being pummelled by the very same economic forces.

Not that it is always easy to identify allies. A decade ago, Central America solidarity activists only had to make contact with the revolutionary fronts. But the organized left in Latin America is in disarray, as many parties and movements have split into factions or shifted to the right. Nor is it a given that factory workers will always line up with factory workers, environmentalists with environmentalists, and so on. As this Report illustrates, the actual on-the-ground alliances have become more complicated. Because *maquiladora* plants can be shut down and relocated at the first hint of union organizing, and because more and more people work in the informal economy, Northern labor activists have discovered that they must work with people not just within factory walls but also in the larger community. Likewise, Northern environmental activists have forged links with poor peoples' movements such as rubber tappers, indigenous people and communities displaced by dams—movements more likely to raise political than strictly environmental demands.

Solidarity is constantly reinventing itself. This report hopes to move the process forward. ■

# Toward a New Internationalism

## Lessons from the Guatemalan Labor Movement

BY DEBORAH LEVENSON-ESTRADA AND HENRY FRUNDT

**L**abor solidarity in the 1990s must move beyond fantasies. The exhortation, "workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains," inspired socialist trade unionists over the last century

toward an idealized vision of working-class internationalism. Their hope was partially realized with the formation of international trade secretariats attached to various unions, but as protective national labor movements thrived and the left-wing labor impetus faded, the original notion of global worker unity grew distant, archaic and dreamy.

Meanwhile, capitalists have become the internationalists for whom borders are an obstacle and nationalism a waning ideology. Capitalists have accelerated the globalization process with their own firms backed by powerful international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and now the new World Trade Organization which will oversee the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Such organizations operate outside political regimes, command enormous resources, affect the daily lives of millions of people, and have no public accountability. Yet as capitalists pursue the internationalization of economic and financial poli-

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*Striking Coca-Cola workers singing on the roof of the company's plant in celebration of a union settlement in 1985.*

cies, their agreements on trade and related issues—indirectly bolstered by the December 1994 heads-of-state summit in Miami—can mean life or death for millions of Latin Americans.

The new phase of capitalist expansion has weakened tradi-

tional accommodations with national unions which have long been declining in strength. Today, even with less than 12% of the private U.S. workforce unionized, companies look toward the available world pool of bargain-price labor. To counter the international clout of mighty corporations, cross-border cooperative struggles of workers and kindred groups have become a matter of survival.

Corporations increasingly have interconnected global operations. Take the world's largest shirt maker headquartered in New Jersey, Phillips Van Heusen (PVH). While it has mainland factories, PVH subcontracts all over the map, with direct production facilities in Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Puerto Rico. All of these plants can be visualized as "departments" of a single global factory. In the U.S. "department," for example, after a particular garment is designed, workers size the model, then mark and cut the cloth into component parts of the shirt. These parts are shipped to another "department," a *maquiladora* finishing or assembly plant in Honduras or Guatemala. There, the "lower-skilled" tasks are completed—the stitching together of components, pressing, folding and packaging. The garment is then shipped back to the United States where it is marketed.

PATRICIA GORDON

The PVH example represents a step beyond the process Lenin wrote about when imperialism meant the internationalization of capital. Now, it involves the internationalization of production and distribution. Class solidarity now demands the confrontation of common employers like PVH. Ultimately, this necessitates organizing the various departments. Many workers, however, have no means of communicating with workers in other countries, even if their hands touch the same cloth. This must change. Working-class internationalism is not a utopian vision, but a bread and margarine, rice and beans issue. Without it, employers will freely maneuver within their global operations to maximize profit with little regard for the impact this has on the workers they hire and fire around the world. If production and ownership are global, workers' organization must be as well.

A clear cross-border organizing strategy must first shift from nationalism as the primary trade-union response to the loss of jobs when U.S. factories move abroad. It must combat the xenophobia of U.S. workers who protest the "giving" of "American" jobs to non-union "foreigners"—whether the reference is to workers in a Central American city, or to a seedy, subcontracting workshop in a U.S. Chinatown.

Many labor activists realize that a new sort of internationalism must be created. During the Cold War, U.S. unions often organized abroad under U.S. government auspices. The AFL-CIO-sponsored American Institute of Free Labor Development (AIFLD), which sought to undermine the appeal of Communist-led labor organizations, also organized under the patronage of the U.S. government. With the end of the Cold War, the importance of these anti-Communist groups is diminishing. Today, a number of U.S. unions, influenced by the example of European international trade secretariats, are expanding pragmatically, not to undercut the left, but to maintain bargaining power with employers. Mexico has been the site of lively organizing drives by the United Electrical Workers (UE) working with the Authentic Workers Front (FAT) at General Electric, the Teamsters at Honeywell, and the United Auto Workers (UAW) at Mexican Ford and Volkswagen plants. The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) are also following factories across borders

to organize textile workers in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and elsewhere.

Building a new labor internationalism is a task fraught with difficulties. There are numerous economic, political and cultural differences to be worked through, as well as mutual suspicions flowing from ideological divergences and past allegiances. Many Latin American trade unionists, for example, believe their Northern counterparts may still have links to the CIA, while some U.S. activists worry that the Latin Americans' leftist orientation may compromise shop-floor organizing. Despite these difficulties, a fresh internationalism has been developing on the unlikely terrain of Guatemalan labor struggles. Because it is neither highly industrialized nor highly unionized, Guatemala may appear an unlikely birthplace for a new internationalism, but workers in this "peripheral" nation have stimulated innovative approaches to cross-border organizing.

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In mid-1975, 150 workers organized a union at a Coca Cola bottling plant in Guatemala City. The franchise owner, a U.S. national, was notoriously anti-union, and was

pleased to be living in a country where trade unionists were—and are—routinely disappeared and tortured to death. After considerable anti-union violence, Coke workers and supporters contacted the American Friends Service Committee staff working in Central America, and the New York-based Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), which took up their cause. International pressure from these religious groups, combined with continuous shop-floor agitation inside the plant, led to union recognition and a contract in 1978. Subsequently, the company did everything it could to destroy the union, constantly violating the contract, and beating and jailing union leaders. Several workers were killed, and trade-union membership declined.

In 1979, the Geneva-based International Food and Allied Workers Secretariat (IUF) joined religious and human rights groups in an enormous global campaign, bringing a class perspective to what had been largely a human rights issue. From late 1979 to mid-1980, the IUF combined a successful letter-writing campaign to the Guatemalan Presidential Palace with support strikes in Venezuela, France and Mexico, along with union endorsements of a Coke boycott in over 20 countries including Canada, Germany, Italy

and Israel. It convened meetings between the representatives of the parent company in Atlanta, Georgia, and the Guatemala City union. It inspired hundreds of newspaper and magazine articles in dozens of languages about the violence against Guatemalan Coca Cola workers. It also encouraged the world's largest trade-union body, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to support a tourist boycott of Guatemala. In the plant, 60 besieged unionists kept on with the struggle. In August, 1980, shortly after another five Coke workers were killed, the pressure on Coke's Atlanta headquarters became unbearable. It transferred the franchise to new owners on the condition that they respect the union—a tremendous victory for the workers and their international supporters.

By this time, Guatemala was engulfed in a civil war, and most of the nation's unions had been destroyed by state-corporate violence. Yet, protected by international support in this adverse situation, the Coke union, an exceptional survivor, grew. Over the next few years, it developed a profound sense of historical mission, a David overcoming Goliath, a symbol of the capacity to accomplish what seemed impossible. In February, 1984, the new owners—experienced soft-drink businessmen in Latin America—closed the company due to "bankruptcy." In fact, Coke had sold them the franchise so they could milk it dry. Even though the country was under military rule, over 400 workers occupied the plant for one year. With the support of the IUF and a remobilized international movement, the workers won their third major battle in ten years. In 1985, Atlanta officials sold the franchise to yet another set of owners who, to date, have kept their agreement to respect the union, which remains one of the strongest in the country.

The Coca Cola example contains many of the ingredients required for the international labor solidarity of the future. The union's survival in the face of repeated and grotesque attacks depended on the initiative of a small number of individuals: the minority of workers at Coke who kept the union going in the worst of times; the few religious/human rights workers in Central America and elsewhere who promoted their cause;



*Sewing machines being removed from the Transcontinental maquiladora following the owners' decision to relocate.*

and the dedicated individuals at the IUF who decided to make an international case out of Coke. The Coke union's perseverance was also the result of large-scale collective actions: mobilizations by the majority of Coke workers; letter writing by thousands of people; and beverage boycotts and solidarity strikes by thousands of consumers and workers around the world. Key was

the dialectical interchange between individual actions, which often appear to be idealistic uphill battles, and the large institutional efforts that ultimately sheltered the union.

The lesson is that international secretariats, even social-democratic ones like the IUF, cannot single-handedly build a large and expansive global campaign. In this instance, the campaign politics were simple enough: opposition to state and company violence, and support of workers' rights to a living wage and decent conditions. It was, however, the interplay of individual initiative and collective action that kept the union firm, relatively democratic, and effective. Without the strong local, the international campaign would have been meaningless, and without the international support, the union would have been destroyed.

A future international labor movement must emulate the Coke model by maintaining both local and international strength. The model must, however, be modified to fit patterns of international production and distribution that involve subcontracting, legal restructuring, and inter-company trade. In the ten years following the Coke success, Guatemalan workers have attempted this adaptation in fits and starts through cooperation with the Guatemala Labor Education Project (GLEP) and related groups.

After Guatemala was returned—by the military—to a shaky civilian rule in 1986, rural and urban workers began to organize into a number of confederations such as the independent Union of Guatemalan Workers (UNSITRAGUA), and the Confederation of Guatemalan Unions (CUSG) which was largely funded by AIFLD. In 1987, U.S. activists, Guatemalan exiles, and staff members of ACTWU inaugurated GLEP to build on the solidarity generated by the Coca

Cola strike. GLEP was premised on the understanding that the intensity of Guatemalan state violence made it very difficult for Guatemalan workers to win anything without international solidarity. The need for a special mediating group like GLEP—as opposed to a committee within an existing U.S. union—was clear. Without having to wade through the bureaucracy of a U.S. union, GLEP could act directly and quickly to support Guatemalan labor unions, look for ways to educate U.S. workers, and encourage U.S. unions to join in these efforts. But GLEP, in common with the IUF and the post-1986 labor movement in Guatemala, faced additional unforeseen challenges due to transformations in the Guatemalan economy and workforce.

By the mid-1980s, not only was the labor movement small and plagued with the traumas that state terror constantly reproduces, but existing Guatemalan industry had slithered into crisis due to lower revenues and increased debt payments. Factory after factory—including many in the food and beverage sector where the IUF sought to organize—shut their doors. As the existing industrial working class stagnated, workers moved into the informal economy where they enjoyed even fewer legal protections. By 1995, Guatemala City's informal sector employed two-thirds of its economically active population. In the formal sector, many workers had moved from larger companies to smaller ones where working conditions remained harsh, and organizing was particularly difficult.

New industries, largely composed of *maquiladoras*, arrived during this period of growing urban and rural poverty, when capitalist restructuring called for privatization, a sharp decrease in social spending, and the lowering of labor costs through the downgrading of labor conditions and lowering of wages. Since 1986, *maquiladora* plants, located either in the city or on the outskirts of nearby towns whose residents usually work in agriculture, have increased from six to nearly 500. They are owned by citizens from Guatemala and other countries, notably Korea. Guatemalan *maquiladoras* generally are finishing plants which assemble garments cut in the United States. The approximately 100,000 workers they employ are primarily young women—some as young as eleven years of age. As elsewhere in the hemisphere, they have now replaced men in a new “re-gendering” of Guatemala's industrial workforce. Organizing the *maquiladora* sector, and allying with workers in the

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Guatemalan trade unionists have begun to organize in the neighborhoods where *maquiladoras* tend to be concentrated. Then, should the factory leave, the workers still have some organization.

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informal economy posed problems that extended international solidarity beyond the Coca Cola model. In the 1980s and 1990s, GLEP, Guatemalan unions and their U.S. union supporters have employed new means to respond to these new issues.

Several union-busting actions at *maquiladora* plants in the late 1980s led to local-international labor cooperation. At the Lunafil thread plant in 1987, and the U.S.-owned Inexport *maquiladora* in 1988, the owners locked out all union members. In 1988 the Playknits *maquiladora*, a subcontractor for Liz Claiborne, suddenly shut its Guatemalan facility, without even

covering workers' back pay. Following the Coca-Cola example, the UNSITRAGUA-affiliated workers occupied the premises of all three companies until they were ejected by police, at which point they camped out in front of the facilities. In all these cases, GLEP rallied with protests and publicity about U.S. corporate behavior and, on behalf of Playknits' union, GLEP was able to arrange negotiations in New York between union representatives and the company. Negotiations won monetary compensation for laid-off workers. At Lunafil and Inexport, GLEP helped the workers gain reinstatement and maintain union recognition.

Between 1991 and 1993, GLEP generated a huge U.S. campaign to force Phillips Van Heusen to recognize the CUSG-affiliated union in its Guatemalan plants where intimidation was rampant. GLEP circulated information about the PVH *maquiladora* inside U.S. textile unions, and organized demonstrations at scores of PVH outlets in at least 15 states. Although bargaining has yet to occur, the company improved wages and working conditions, and acknowledged the union. Accelerating pressure on contract purchasers Sears, J.C. Penny and Wal-Mart, GLEP also supported a reinstatement of women workers at a *maquiladora* called Confecciones Unidas. Even though the incipient *maquila* unions remain fragile, GLEP, Guatemalan labor organizers, and a representative of the ILGWU are working to approach other *maquiladora* workers in an effort to encourage them to organize. To increase rank-and-file solidarity in the United States, GLEP even brought some ILGWU members from the Leslie Fay plant in Pennsylvania to Guatemala. The Leslie Fay workers, who had mounted protests to prevent the company from shifting operations to Guatemala, left the United States thinking Guatemalan workers were the problem. They



returned thinking they shared problems with their Guatemalan counterparts.

U.S. and Guatemalan labor activists have also pressed employers to enforce labor codes that incorporate employee protections. They have successfully elicited such codes from PVH, Coca-Cola, and various U.S. purchasers of *maquiladora* products. Working with ACTWU, Levi-Strauss has authored its own worldwide code, and contracts have been terminated for non-compliance. Recently, GLEP supporters have extended the call for codes to the rural sectors. In the United States, they are leafletting Starbucks, a popular gourmet coffee company, demanding adoption of a code of conduct that would require Guatemalan plantation owners from whom they purchase to respect basic rights, pay a living wage, and honor safety and health standards.

**G**LEP, U.S. supporters such as the International Labor Rights Education and Research Fund (ILRERF) and the Central American Working Group (CAWG), and Guatemalan trade unionists have also successfully employed U.S. trade law to call attention to labor abuses in Guatemala. This involves pressuring the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) to penalize Guatemala under the provisions of the 1984 General System of Preferences (GSP). GSP allows for penalties against countries which do not make progress in eliminating five types of labor violations: interference with free association; obstruction of union organizing/bargaining; child labor; slave labor; and sub-minimum working conditions. Because *maquiladora* owners regularly commit four of these abuses—there is no slave labor in the *maquiladora*—there were ample grounds for action. In 1992, Guatemala was placed on GSP probation.

Between 1991 and 1994, GLEP-ILRERF missions visited Guatemalan factories, spoke to corporate leaders and public officials, and met with union groups from all the major confederations. All this pressure had an effect. In late 1992, Guatemala revised its labor code to speed union recognition and improve rights for women. For the first time, it punished several corporate violators in the *maquiladora* sector. In mid-1993, when President Jorge Serrano Elías attempted to assume dictatorial powers, unions participated in the battle to restore constitutional rule. The private sector, and eventually the military, refused to support Serrano because they feared the loss of U.S. trade privileges, forcing him to flee the country.

By 1994, facing insistent demands from the U.S. Embassy to support Guatemala's new president, Ramiro de León Carpio, the U.S. Trade Representative was poised to drop its review but twice backed down, first because of ILGWU mobilization over

Leslie Fay, and then after 500 police attacked protesting workers at the Empresa Exacta cattle ranch in the western highlands who were demanding union recognition to assure their legally required minimum wages of two dollars a day. The police wounded 13 workers, killed two, and abducted one, later dropping his tortured body from a helicopter.

**G**uatemala remains a difficult country for union activity. Workers may win union recognition, but since 25% of the workforce must join before negotiations are mandatory, they often gain no contracts. *Maquiladoras* are especially problematic because they can close quickly, move out machinery, and reopen elsewhere in the same country or a nearby country whenever an organizing drive begins. One innovative approach proposed by Guatemalan trade unionists has been to organize in the neighborhoods where *maquiladoras* tend to be concentrated—not only inside the factory. Then, should the factory leave, the workers have some organization, and they can better discuss and confront their problems. Workers' neighborhood committees facilitate self-defense in many arenas, and link informal- and formal-economy workers.

In thinking out a fresh approach to organizing, Guatemalan unions are debating what tactics are most useful under varying conditions of repression. At issue is the extent to which repression has changed from being officially sanctioned (as under the regimes of Romeo Lucas García and Efraín Ríos Montt, from 1978 to 1983) to being controlled by specific owners or landholders who have certain military connections. Even under officially sanctioned repression, as in the case of Coca Cola, organizers could sometimes achieve victory through noisy public demonstrations in conjunction with international support. However, as repression has become more selective and less official, some argue that *maquiladora* and other organizing should be more systematic and clandestine to assure the 25% union membership necessary for bargaining. "The army really doesn't care what happens to Korean or North American firms, and we should take advantage of this to quietly build union strength," stated one labor activist. Others remain willing to hold a well-publicized demonstration in front of a plant, but are less convinced that the clandestine door-to-door work can be done safely, even though it would increase union membership.

A fresh approach requires examining the old issue of gender practices and beliefs. The trade-union movement on both sides of the border is male in leadership and self-conception, although both men and women belong to unions. Even the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), which has a long tradition of organizing women workers in the United



States, has not yet overturned sexism and male domination within its union. To assist in, and not to undermine the organization of *maquiladoras*, male trade unionists must alter their perceptions of women as primarily housewives, not workers, who are fragile and need protection by male trade unionists, and who in a short time will be out of the factory and back where they belong, in the home.

Within the Guatemalan labor movement, this understanding is one most men share with the many women who see their factory work as temporary and their *maquiladora* wage as supplementary to male wages—even absent ones. The identification of women *maquiladora* workers as moonlighting housewives, and not as workers, makes organizing difficult. Despite the female leadership of *maquiladora* sit-ins, male trade unionists have been hesitant to organize the *maquiladoras* in part because they see the workers there as less “real.” Since they are not men, they are thought to be incapable of the militancy that trade unionism requires. While some women workers hold this view, many, in increasing numbers, reject it. In the Guatemalan labor movement, women are inventing a grassroots working-class feminism.

**T**he Guatemalan case has shown that corporate campaigns and code demands, combined with strong local organizing, can be an important antidote to the unrestricted corporate expansion promoted by NAFTA and GATT. The advantage of corporate codes is that they offer the U.S. public a chance to apply consumer pressure as a sign of labor solidarity abroad. It should be axiomatic that if a worker at a cattle ranch which exports beef to the United States is dumped out of an army helicopter to prevent him from organizing a union, as happened at Empresa Exacta, or if a labor leader at a banana plantation that sells to Chiquita is shot dead by anti-union thugs, as just happened at the Chinnok Finca in the eastern part of the country, we would not buy Empresa Exacta beef or Chiquita bananas. Labor solidarity must determine how to generate a larger, more analytical, creative and activist “we.”

The labor-rights strategy is also an essential political approach that requires the collaboration of unions on both sides of any border. While other groups have effectively documented cases of rights abuses, what makes GLEP-Guatemalan labor solidarity worthy of imitation is its cultivation of a two-way process in



A GLEP solidarity poster.

developing a labor-rights strategy using U.S. trade law. Given the loss of any meaningful labor-rights provisions in NAFTA, cross-border trade-union supporters are invoking trade provisions to emphasize the upholding of local labor laws.

Quiet, systematic organizing is a third requirement, but the battle will be a long one. After a number of apparent successes, unionized workers have been isolated and prevented from any meaningful ability to negotiate a contract, and companies have often closed. As the PVH and other Guatemalan examples suggest, success will eventually require organizing all of the company’s “departments” around the world. This begins when a strong and strategic local organizing effort is combined

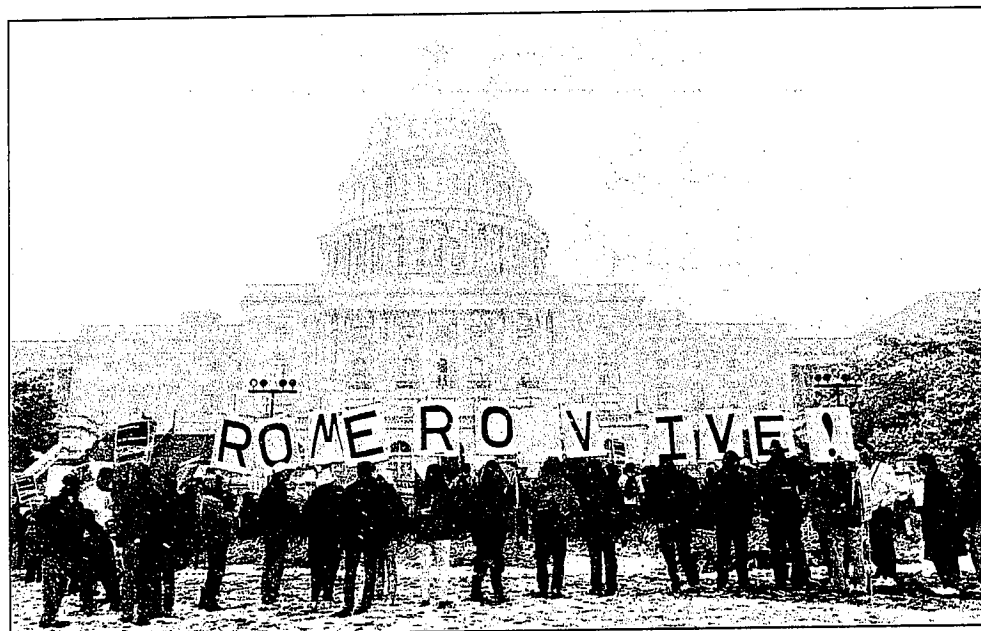
with international worker and consumer support. It demands both sophisticated international coordination and on-site individual involvement.

Finally, an effective challenge to male domination and “normative” gender roles and ideologies remains on the agenda. The decades-old “imagining” of class militancy as male really backfires in the new global economy—even if it hadn’t before. A new internationalism must “demasculinize” conceptions of class, militancy and leadership. U.S. unions are not significantly less male chauvinist than their Latin counterparts, but many of the U.S. men and women who work in Latin American labor solidarity tend to be more conscious of the discourse of feminism. If they are not self-critical, however, they risk being patronizing and condescending toward Latin American workers—male and female. The problem of sexist ideology and practice, like many others, is international, and the solution must come from the women and men who suffer because of it.

Drawing on the Coke model, these strategies offer the beginnings of a program for labor solidarity. They enable unions and supporters across borders to effectively fight the elimination of wage equity, health and safety protections, and union rights. The strategies protect the hard-fought-for rights recognized by the International Labor Organization, now encoded in the labor legislation of most nations. The labor solidarity movement is demanding its own codes of accountability and trade-based labor standards and is pursuing basic organizing principles and gender sensitivity. Only in this way will it break the chains forged by corporate power, and allow working people to build their own new and very real international bond. ■

# Active Engagement

## The Legacy of Central America Solidarity



Ten thousand people attend the 1990 march in Washington, D.C. to mark the tenth anniversary of Archbishop Romero's assassination.

BY VAN GOSSE

**O**n the evening of March 19, 1994, just hours before the beginning of El Salvador's national election day, a grand diplomatic party was held to honor all of the international observers at the cavernous, now-redundant U.S. Embassy in San Salvador's suburbs. The usual crowd was there—high-ranking UN personnel, foreign diplomats and bigwigs like former Costa Rican President Oscar Arias, leading Salvadoran politicians, and three members of Congress representing President Bill Clinton.

At the door, U.S. Ambassador Alan Flanigan welcomed a rather different set of guests: Central America solidarity movement leaders from the SHARE Foundation, CRISPAZ, the National Agenda for Peace in El Salvador, Witness for Peace, Voices on the Border and the Center for Global Education, along with various prominent church and academic figures, and four allied members of Congress.

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What were they doing there at the Embassy, sipping wine and munching hors d'oeuvres? These guests were organizers of the U.S. Citizens Elections Observer Mission (USCEOM), which had brought 700 official observers—North Americans who paid their own way and by that evening were already deployed in towns all over El Salvador.<sup>1</sup> Next to the UN, this was by far the largest group of international observers. By inviting them to the party, the Embassy was simply recognizing that fact. (That USCEOM had brought a larger congressional delegation than the State Department didn't hurt either.) Not so long before, this same Embassy had distributed detailed guides to linkages between several of the above organizations and the guerrillas of the FMLN. By 1994, with a Democratic Administration, a different tune was being played.

As this anecdote illustrates, while the Central American proxy wars of the 1980s may have receded into history, the U.S. solidarity movement that supported the region's revolutionaries retained much of its vigor well into the 1990s, confounding various premature claims of its demise.

The scene at the Embassy illustrates the character of the solidarity movement's achievements. The movement succeeded in making itself a force to be acknowledged and accommodated by U.S. government policymakers, and it learned to operate overseas, directly confronting and paralleling the official policy with its own mechanisms of aid and "accompaniment." Not incidentally, this success required an unblinking willingness to play on two separate terrains—that of policymaking within the U.S. political system, and that of a particular country with its own political culture—and to accept the rules and terms of each [See "In Whose Interest?," p. 27].

It is already evident that the history of the Central America solidarity movement will be seen in very different ways. Critics of the movement see its relative contraction after 1990 as evidence of its profound failure. They lament

what they consider to be the movement's short-term impact, and its inability to provoke a long-lasting rupture in the tradition of U.S. hegemony in Latin America. Others argue that the solidarity movement's willingness to seek accommodation with the powers-that-be resulted in co-optation of, and collaboration by the left. But to make sense of this debate, one must first have some idea of the history.

The Central America solidarity movement was like the national debt. Everyone knew it was there, but few, even among its supporters, knew where it came from or how it operated. There are plenty of explanations for this lack of self-awareness: the movement's rejection of 1960s-style publicity-seeking (or maybe just the absence of media attention); the habitual modesty of Christian activists; the secular left's bemused attitude towards the vanguard of religious people; a consciously low profile because of the strong presence of exiled Central Americans. The main reason, however, was the movement's widely dispersed physical structure, which made it hard to see as a unified body.

First, to state the obvious, this was always a very small movement, trying to mobilize on the left when it seemed that the country had embraced the right. Up to 80,000 people signed the "Pledge of Resistance," promising to commit civil disobedience if the United States invaded Nicaragua, and another 4,000 visited Nicaragua with Witness for Peace (along with thou-

sands more on coffee-picking brigades or solidarity tours). It is unlikely, however, that more than 20,000 people were Central America activists at any one time.<sup>2</sup> The largest national organizations like the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), Witness for Peace and Neighbor to Neighbor each had tens of thousands of contributors, but this pales besides the millions supporting other progressive groups like Greenpeace, the Nuclear Freeze or the National Abortion Rights Action League.

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The sharpest indication of the movement's limited reach came when it attempted to mount national demonstrations in Washington, D.C. In hindsight, most of these marches were at best holding actions. Only twice could organizers claim they had broken (barely) into six figures—in May, 1981, when El Sal-

vador was the focus of an anti-Reagan mobilization initiated by the Workers World Party, and in April, 1987, in a labor-backed Central America-South Africa protest that was the solidarity movement's high point. Less impressive were demonstrations on March 27, 1982 (60,000 claimed), November 12, 1983 (35,000, according to the *Guardian*), and the March 24, 1990 march commemorating the tenth anniversary of Archbishop Oscar Romero's assassination, which drew only 10,000 people.<sup>3</sup>

Yet despite its small size, this was a movement of bewildering diversity, an oddly workable cacophony of individual and institutional histories, and highly developed organizational practices. Most of the Central America movement's many separate strands were sharply focused: on a country (Nicaragua, Guatemala or El Salvador); a "sector" in the United States (nuns, architects, teachers, farmers, veterans, students and so on); a type of solidarity (material aid, civil disobedience, "accompaniment," lobbying); or even just a single village (as in the sister-city movement, the backbone of local Nicaragua solidarity after 1985).

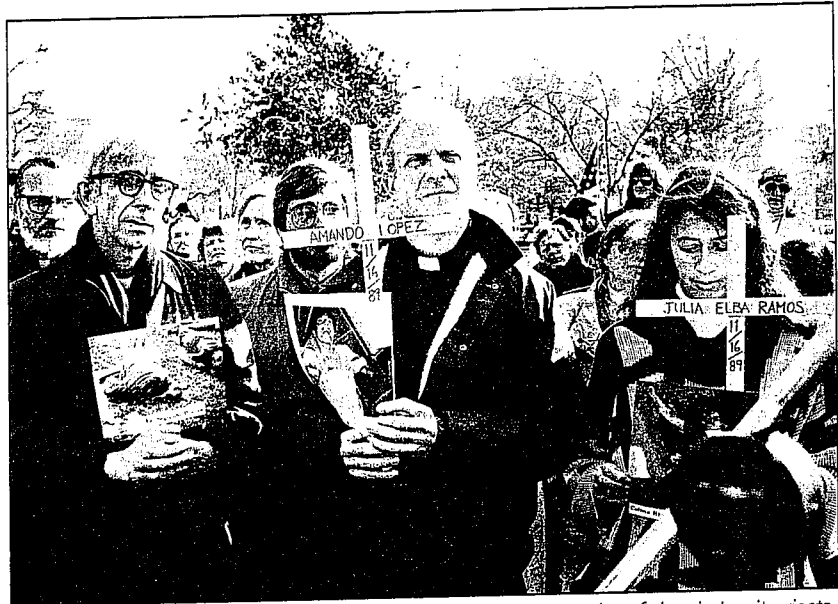
This pluralism was the source of a remarkable enthusiasm and tolerance, since people generally went where their instincts and talents led them and found their natural bedfellows. It was also an excellent antidote to the kind of sectarianism that on occasion plagued the antiwar movement and earlier solidarity efforts with Latin America. There was little or no space for bitter maneuvering over the grand strate-

gy of "the movement," since the regionalized war required several simultaneous strategies. Most significantly, over the 15 years of its existence, the Central America movement nearly always acted on the basis of needs defined by Central Americans themselves. Simply put, this was never a movement with any deep concern for whether or not it would or could change the United States. It hoped to change U.S. policy and to offer a meaningful (not symbolic) level of material aid on the ground in the various countries.

No movement spontaneously generates itself, however much it may appear that way even to participants. It is a given that the Central America movement of the 1980s has an organic relation to the vast antiwar upsurge of 1965-72. The latter made opposition to U.S. imperialism a semi-legitimate position in U.S. politics. But however much the "Vietnam Syndrome" of popular anti-interventionism undergirded it, Central America solidarity did not proceed directly out of the antiwar movement.

For one thing, the earliest forerunner of the Central America movement predates the U.S. ground war in Vietnam. Back in the late 1950s, Fidel Castro's not-yet-socialist revolution was popular with many North Americans during its phase of anti-dictatorial guerrilla struggle. From April 1960 through the Bay of Pigs invasion one year later, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) briefly flourished as a proto-solidarity organization, attracting thousands of disaffected liberals, newly leftist youth and African Americans. But the group's association with Lee Harvey Oswald, however exaggerated, dumped this history down the memory hole.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1960s, the rising tide of antiwar militance had bred a millenarian style of anti-imperialism, which again looked to Cuba and Latin America. Following publicized trips by prominent New Leftists, the Venceremos Brigade gained considerable fame in 1969-70 by violating the U.S. travel ban *en masse*, sending 1,400 youthful volunteers to join the mobilization for a "ten million ton" harvest. The continuing efforts of the Brigade as a national network helped spur a revival of Cuba solidarity in the early 1970s involving the Center for Cuban Studies and other groups.<sup>5</sup>



Solidarity activists in Washington, D.C. denounce the 1989 murder of the six Jesuit priests and their housekeeper in El Salvador.

Less visibly, though with great effect, various tendrils of religious solidarity began to sprout among the thousands of North American ex-missionaries permanently seared by their experiences in Latin America since the 1950s. Much of this early faith-based activism was low-key reflection and debate among friends and colleagues, intended to move existing church institutions away from anti-Communist rigidity. Only occasionally did it break out into the open, as when a group of Maryknoll missionaries were expelled from Guatemala at the end of 1967 for aiding the guerrilla movement.<sup>6</sup>

It was not until the September 1973 coup in Chile that all of these impulses coalesced into a national movement. For the next five years, the self-named Chile Solidarity Movement mobilized dozens of local groups to denounce the Pinochet government, press for a cut-off of U.S. aid, and agitate for the release of political prisoners. In all these programmatic areas, there was considerable success, but as with the decade's other major experience of solidarity, the pro-independence Puerto Rico Solidarity Committee, a debilitating sectarianism undermined the movement's effectiveness.

In both cases, the cause of this sectarianism is clear: the lack of unity in the countries, or movements, to which solidarity was extended. Memories of the resulting infighting, as U.S. activists postured for and attacked each other (and each others' foreign allies), was the context for the different, much broader and more unified solidarity movement that grew up just before and after the victory of the Sandinista National

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The Nicaragua solidarity movement arose in response to urgent needs, and since the Contra war was a prolonged one, it put down deep roots.

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grew out of the powerful lobbying coalition of church denominations and peace organizations of the late Vietnam War years, and included new Latin America-focused groups such as the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), founded in 1974. After 1975, the main venue for policy advocacy became the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy (CNFMP) and the associated Human Rights Working Group (HRWG). In 1982, the HRWG spawned the Central America Working Group (CAWG), which is still going strong in 1995 with 49 member organizations.<sup>8</sup>

In February, 1979, many of the national organizations in the CNFMP/HRWG came together with the local solidarity committees to found the National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People (NNSNP). With the public endorsement of prominent congressional liberals and the United Auto Workers (UAW), the NNSNP successfully coordinated a surge of protest, outrage and finally excitement over Latin America's first revolution in 20 years, helping to stymie Carter Administration efforts to preserve *Somocismo* without Somoza. Efforts then turned, with considerable success, to promoting U.S. economic aid and tolerance for the provisional government.

In 1980, organizing work around Nicaragua was largely shunted to the sidelines with the eruption of yet another revolutionary crisis, this time in El Salvador.<sup>9</sup> During *Sandinismo*'s first hopeful glow, there were no large national campaigns to promote solidarity. They hardly seemed necessary, since thousands of North Americans were visiting on their own and drawing inspiration from the popular enthusiasm for the revolution's early successes. In 1983-84, when the Contra

Liberation Front (FSLN) on July 19, 1979.<sup>7</sup>

Numerous local Chile or Latin America committees reoriented themselves towards Nicaragua in 1978-79. In addition, a "human rights community" had established itself in Washington, D.C. as the respectable face of solidarity. This network

War revved up, Nicaragua again became the focus for U.S. governmental propaganda and negative press coverage. Two important solidarity organizations were founded at that time: the faith-based Pledge of Resistance (POR) network, which reached into nearly every congressional district, and the more long-lasting Witness for Peace (WfP), the paradigm of an organized Christian solidarity with its distinctive practice of keeping "witnesses" continually in place in war zones.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to these two key organizations, the Nicaragua Network—the renamed NNSNP—promoted material aid and harvest brigades, helping to send thousands of *brigadistas* who became a new activist core. At the local level, the most significant development was the rapid organizing of over 100 "sister-cities," along with sector-based material-aid projects such as TecNica, which sent large numbers of computer professionals and other technicians for short and long-term stays.

The sister-city movement is emblematic of the decentralized character of Nicaragua solidarity work. It developed as activists returned in large numbers, wanting to maintain a link with the Nicaragua they had seen up close—an urban barrio, rural town or cooperative. Though sister-city activists shared ideas and met with each other at conferences, their efforts essentially reflected individual initiative and personal experience. Their most important national connection was through the Quest for Peace campaign of the dissident Catholic organization, the Quixote Center. The Quest stimulated a massive delivery of goods and services, most visibly the constant loading of trucks and cargo containers by local sister-cities, as well as discounted medicines and donated medical equipment.

The real center of Nicaragua solidarity, however, was the seemingly unending congressional battle over funding the Contras, which involved most of the national solidarity groups. After 1985, these efforts were augmented by an important new national organization, Neighbor to Neighbor, created explicitly to carry out intensive local congressional pressure campaigns against U.S. policy in Central America. Finally, several high-powered lobbying projects, such as the "Countdown '87" coalition, were formed to shore up the Democratic Party's equivocal opposition to the Contra war.

While broadly unified in its general goals and responsive to the Sandinistas (through interactions in Nicaragua, rather than through a strong presence of Nicaraguans in the United States), this was a movement without any organizational center other than the groups' cooperative relationship in lobbying Congress. It arose in response to urgent needs, and since the Contra war was a prolonged one, it put down deep roots. Indeed the movement retained its vigor up until

the Sandinistas' February 1990 electoral defeat, which was "observed" by several thousand North American activists. Following that body blow, Nicaragua solidarity contracted in scope and scale, which was virtually inevitable, though in the early 1990s many sister-cities and some national organizations maintained themselves and appear likely to continue. Here as elsewhere in post-revolutionary and post-intervention situations, the question is this: how much does a U.S.-based solidarity movement depend upon the existence of a direct, high-profile confrontation between the United States and a revolutionary movement, regardless of the latter's actual needs?



"George Bush" leads "Contras" through the streets of Manhattan in a demonstration against Contra aid in November, 1990.

One answer to this question is provided by Guatemala. Guatemala solidarity work has been the poor relation of the Central America movement, never receiving its due though sometimes benefiting from the association. The discovery of Central America as "the most important place in the world" (in Jeane Kirkpatrick's words) was the catalyst in forming the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) in 1980 as a national solidarity group. The latter brought together a small but hardy handful of Guatemala committees with churchpeople and academics. It has persevered into the present under the most difficult conditions: while local activists swung back and forth between El Salvador and Nicaragua, few ever switched over to Guatemala.

The Guatemala movement had several particular advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the sheer starkness of slaughter in the indigenous highlands gave the Guatemalan *guerrillero* a genuine moral force. Add to this the steadily growing fame and charisma of Rigoberta Menchu, culminating in her 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, and there were certainly ingredients for a powerful solidarity appeal. On the other hand, the struggle in Guatemala did not become a war between the United States and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), remaining throughout a war between Guatemala's left and right. In addition, the Guatemalan revolutionaries, never as strong as their comrades in El Salvador or Nicaragua, did not prioritize U.S. solidarity work. Thus very few in the Central America movement know anything

about the four organizations that make up the URNG, their leaders, or their political program.

Under these circumstances, it is to NISGUA's considerable credit that it achieved as much as it did in generating support for the slow regeneration of Guatemala's popular movement, after the mass bloodletting of 1980-83 that seriously weakened the URNG. Without a legislative vehicle and with Guatemala out of the news, NISGUA emphasized "people-to-people" solidarity, meaning delegations, tours of speakers through the United States, material aid, and human rights pressure via rapid-response telex/phone/fax networks. This "direct" solidarity built a deep commitment among core activists. However abstract or tokenistic to some leftists outside the solidarity movement, its effects were considerably more than symbolic to the union leader saved from death or the human rights group able to open an office. But as Guatemala activists discovered, it is difficult to mobilize large numbers of people and build a publicly visible movement in the United States solely around this kind of grinding day-to-day work.

In contrast to Guatemala, El Salvador was in the news throughout the 1980s; and in contrast to the decentralized nature of Nicaragua solidarity movement, the main body of El Salvador solidarity work always had an organizational center in CISPES and related organizations.<sup>11</sup> Founded in October, 1980, in the same week that the Farabundo Martí Liberation Front (FMLN) was created by five guerrilla organizations—and with the support of adherents to one partic-



ular tendency—CISPES was from its inception the biggest presence in the Central America solidarity movement. By the late 1980s, it had a large national staff (54 paid in 1990, plus an equal number of "full-time volunteers"), a stable base of chapters in most major cities and college towns, numerous conventions, conferences and training sessions, and a demanding program encompassing everything from material aid to congressional lobbying.

In addition to CISPES, the national and local efforts of its close allies like the SHARE and NEST Foundations (well-organized material-aid groups with networks of sister-cities and sister-parishes), Medical Aid for El Salvador, the Central American Refugee Cen-

ters (CARECEN) and their predecessor organizations of Salvadoran exiles, and the National Agenda for Peace in El Salvador (a legislative network with over 600 local contacts in 1989-1992) gave this wing of the El Salvador solidarity movement considerable weight. Because of the consistent attention these groups paid to the task of building organization, even when the overwhelming emphasis turned to opposing Contra aid, El Salvador solidarity never disappeared. When the country resurfaced in the news with a vengeance, the main forces of El Salvador solidarity geared up to support a long-awaited FMLN offensive which finally came in November, 1989, leading to the peace accords of January, 1992.

### IN WHOSE INTERESTS?

The most intriguing and still-unanswered question regarding the Central America solidarity movement has to do with its private allies and sponsors outside of the left. It is no revelation to note that Reagan's re-staging of Vietnam in Nicaragua and El Salvador enjoyed less than overwhelming support from the propertied classes in this country. If that were not the case, there would have been no need for back-alley operations carried out by second-rank lone rangers like Oliver North. A true united front of capital, such as existed from roughly 1945 through the Tet Offensive in 1968, would have easily snuffed out the FSLN, the FMLN and much else, whatever the cost.

But after Vietnam, no such consensus was possible. In the foreign-policy elite, in the investment community, in the Council on Foreign Relations, and finally therefore in Congress, a perspective had developed that looked at military or paramilitary intervention in the Third World—and militarism in general—with a skeptical eye. In *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers argue that there are specific sectors of capital (especially real-estate interests and some multinationally focused investment banks) which periodically support peace organizing and anti-interventionist or anti-militarist liberal candidates because it is in their political-economic interest to do so. They marshal convincing evidence to demonstrate that these sectors "invested" in the Nuclear Freeze movement of the early 1980s so as to blunt what was seen as an unproductive and dangerous trend towards military confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Many of the foundations—like Ford and Rockefeller—which have supported and influenced the Freeze and other social movements since the 1960s, also invested in the Central America movement.

Most of the money presumably went to the Washington-based human rights community, though smaller sums were also directed to more radical forces if they were demonstrably effective. Most solidarity activists, if they knew of it at all, were puzzled by the 1992 Republican attempt to smear Hillary Clinton as a "radical leftist" because she had chaired the board of the New World Foundation when it gave CISPES a modest grant. I would contend that this connection was no accident, any more than the strange insistence of traditional Democratic Party leaders such as Tip O'Neill and Jim Wright in pressing for negotiated solutions in Central America can be attributed to the former's sentimental connections with Maryknoll nuns or the latter's egomania.

Is this hypothesis intended to suggest that the solidarity movement, or its friends in Central America's revolutionary movements, were bought off or duped by the discrete charms of the "liberal bourgeoisie"? Not at all. The whole point of the contemporary practice of solidarity—unless one believes it is merely the mouthing of slogans and the giving of unwanted advice about how to make the proper kind of revolution—is to operate as a counter-hegemonic force within the United States, using the advantages provided by political contradictions here to benefit the struggle there. The not-inconsiderable merit of the Central America movement is that it suggested how far those contradictions could be pushed.

Given the unipolar world we now inhabit, where no great or even mid-sized power is likely to act as an insurance agency for social revolution, movements for justice in the poor regions of the world will have a very limited margin within which to maneuver. The lessons of the 1980s—how to confront and adapt to the prevailing trends in the North—may turn out to be very useful. —VG



Other national El Salvador groups also serviced the great mass of local Central America and peace committees that had no strong organizational affiliations. These included Christians for Peace in El Salvador (CRISPAZ) and material-aid organizations like Voices on the Border, Voices with the Voiceless, and Companion Communities, all of which supported particular areas in rebel "zones of control." A special role was played by the Religious Task Force on Central America, which since 1980 has centered on the largely invisible but crucial networks of activists in the Catholic womens' orders.

In addition to the CISPES-led bloc and these other organizations, a key actor in El Salvador solidarity was the Sanctuary Movement. Between 1983 and 1987, this unique derivative of faith-based activism flourished as the purest "grass-roots" expression of solidarity. At its peak around 1985, 400 local congregations had declared themselves in open defiance of the U.S. government, while great public attention was excited by federal trials of organizers in the movement's Southwest borderlands homebase.

The Sanctuary phenomenon had key activists in Tucson and at the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, who disseminated the methodology and theology of Sanctuary and built up the underground railroad of Central American refugees (mainly Salvadorans plus some Guatemalans).<sup>12</sup> However, both legal considerations and a highly personalist and anti-organizational ethos, derived in part from the Quaker traditions motivating some participants, militated against the creation of any permanent organization or network linking up these local churches. The Sanctuary Movement dwindled rather quickly in the later 1980s. This had less to do with organizational failings than with the success of the nationwide campaign to rein in the Immigration and Nationalization Service (INS) and to extend a form of temporary asylum to all undocumented Salvadoran refugees.

Some outside observers criticize the solidarity movement for failing to generate a new and stronger U.S. left. Others regard the fact that so much suffering continues in the region as evidence of the movement's limited achievements and short-term perspective. Such criticism demonstrates a serious



*A construction brigade builds a community center in Nicaragua in the mid-1980s.*

misunderstanding of (1) the role that social movements play, and (2) the character of the U.S. left.

Movements such as Central America solidarity, of intense conjunctural response, are not—nor should they be—substitutes for broader struggles for social change. Let me illustrate this point by example. After 1955 a powerful and tenacious mass movement grew up dedicated to overturning the legal apparatus of segregation and disenfranchisement of African Americans in the U.S. South. This movement neither "failed" to challenge and overturn the less visible political-economic structures of oppression and inequality in the South, nor "failed" to create a multiracial left. It focused on the necessary and primary stage of struggle and made an historic breakthrough, however incomplete that Second Reconstruction remains. More than that did not prove possible, and no amount of voluntarism would have changed the result.

On a considerably smaller, but still consequential stage, a large part of the U.S. left threw itself into Central America solidarity for a decade or more, recognizing correctly that we can make our own history, but hardly ever under conditions that we control. The solidarity movement effectively engaged with the world-as-it-is and forced open a political space. That the Central America solidarity movement did not end U.S. domination in the hemisphere is a given. Nonetheless, its achievements were significant.

Chief among them was the fact that congressional Democrats in the 1980s were forced to respond to their base on Central America.<sup>13</sup> While they were rolling over in innumerable other areas of policy, the Democrats never stopped fighting with Reagan over Central America. It was precisely their nitpicking,

procedural, often hypocritical resistance that led first to the unprecedented creation of the Office of Public Diplomacy in the White House basement, and finally to the Iran-Contra Affair. From my perspective, the Boland Amendment of 1984, which summarily banned all military aid to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, stands among the great victories for the left in recent history. Some on the U.S. left argue that the long-running resistance to President Reagan's support of his pet Nicaraguan "freedom fighters" amounted to little in the end, given the FSLN's electoral defeat in 1990. They forget that the Sandinistas took on and defeated the Contras and their U.S. backers on the battlefield, while the Contra War nearly provoked an impeachment crisis at home.

Other critics charge that the solidarity movement has had no meaningful effect upon U.S. society. They argue that the pervasive and all-consuming urgency of Central America solidarity work was a diversion, while the greater dirty business of Reaganism went on. My answer is that a solidarity movement is, and must be, concerned first and foremost with the revolutionary crisis in the country in question. To deny that centrality is to deny the character of solidarity, as defined by the peoples themselves in struggle, and to substitute a utopian vision of transnational struggle lacking any kind of temporal and spatial parameters.

Some Marxist critics of the solidarity movement often speak as if the movement's primary task is to expose the global machinations of imperial capital by focusing on one particular Third World conflict—presumably whichever one will most heighten the contradictions at home. Such an assumption grossly distorts the essential social character of the movement. First and foremost, the Central America movement comes out of and epitomizes the Christian left of the United States. These activists—and the more secular ones in groups like CISPES, whose motives have been quite similar, if expressed in a different style—operate on the basis of a deep sense of connection with Central American popular movements. This connection—which reflects a sense of both complicity and comradeship—stems from the very specific character of U.S. intervention in Latin America since the 1950s, and Central America in the 1980s. For these activists, there really is no question of "linking struggles" or "exposing imperialism"—these things follow organically, as a result of practice, and in no other way. These ex-missionaries and their numerous friends and associates seem to me the true internationalists: they were called and they went. That sense of civic duty is the very real legacy they have left in place for our future, along with a host of organizations and relationships that seem likely to endure. ■

## CENTRAL AMERICA SOLIDARITY ORGANIZATIONS

Center for Global Education  
Augsburg College  
2211 Riverside Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55454  
(612) 330-1159

Central America Working Group  
110 Maryland Avenue NE, Box 15  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 546-7010

Christians for Peace of  
El Salvador (CRISPAZ)  
1135 Mission Road  
San Antonio, TX 78210  
(210) 534-6996

CISPES  
19 West 21st Street, Room 502  
New York, NY 10010  
(202) 229-1290

U.S./Guatemala Labor  
Education Project (GLEP)  
c/o ACTWU-Chicago Joint Board  
333 S. Ashland  
Chicago, IL 60607  
(312) 262-6502

INTERCONNECT  
Peter and Gail Mott  
57 South Main Street  
Pittsford, NY 14534  
(716) 381-5606

Medical Aid for El Salvador  
6030 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 400  
Los Angeles, CA 90036  
(213) 937-3596

Nicaragua Network  
1247 E Street SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
(202) 544-9355

NISGUA  
1500 Massachusetts Ave. NW #241  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 223-6474

Quest for Peace  
c/o Quixote Center  
PO Box 5206  
Hyatt, MD 20782  
(301) 699-0042

Religious Task Force on  
Central America  
1747 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Third Floor  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 387-8621

SHARE Foundation  
PO Box 192825  
San Francisco, CA 94119  
(415) 882-1530

Voices on the Border  
PO Box 53081  
Temple Heights Station  
Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 529-2912

Washington Office on Latin  
America (WOLA)  
400 C Street NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
(202) 544-8045

Witness for Peace  
2201 P St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
(202) 797-1160

# A Mixed Blessing

## The NGO Boom in Latin America

It is often assumed that the growth of NGOs in Latin America reflects a strengthening of civil society. But in searching for alternative models of development, North American progressives need to question whether these NGOs are invariably the best vehicle.

BY LAURA MACDONALD

**E**l Astillero is a tiny Nicaraguan community perched on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. Until 1979, the abundant varieties of fish and seafood off the coast were harvested only by large privately owned, off-shore trawlers, and sold abroad. After the Sandinistas came to power, they encouraged landless laborers to move to the coast and establish fishing cooperatives. The inshore fisheries were seen as one way to increase food self-sufficiency and employment. After 1985, however, because of the advancing economic crisis, government support for the inshore fisheries dwindled, and promised assistance to El Astillero such as a processing center did not materialize.

The Sandinistas turned to international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to fill the gap. OXFAM-Canada (a progressive NGO with links to OXFAMs in the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium and elsewhere) decided to link up fishermen in Nicaragua with their Canadian counterparts from the Maritime provinces, who, OXFAM thought, had useful technical and organizational expertise to share with the Nicaraguans. The El Astillero project was part of OXFAM's effort to increase solidarity in Canada with the Nicaraguan revolution, to identify common struggles between people in similar positions in their respective countries, and to find ways in which groups in the North could assist their Southern counterparts.

Small delegations of Canadian fishermen began visiting El Astillero in 1986. Not surprisingly, they tended to focus on the low levels of technology in El Astillero, particularly the unstable boats carved by

hand from logs. The Canadians organized shipments of basic equipment like nets, ropes and knives, and built a flat-bottom boat.

Canadian fishermen were enthusiastic about the experience. After a Nicaraguan delegation paid a visit to Canada, a Canadian participant remarked, "people in the community are more open and interested in meeting people from other countries. Before you would have heard a lot of racist comments. Now people see foreigners as interesting people. It is not unusual now to have a few of the guys talking about international issues around the wharf."<sup>1</sup> One of OXFAM's representatives called the linkage "a perfect example of how concrete the international solidarity between working people can be."

Yet when I visited El Astillero in 1989, the local fishermen were sitting in their houses or repairing their nets, while the equipment which OXFAM had provided lay idle on the shore. None of the fishermen were going out to sea because there was no market for their fish, and because they had no money to pay for gasoline to fuel their boats. That year, the local fishing economy had entered into crisis when the state—the only purchaser at that time of local fish—stopped buying from El Astillero. The setback revealed that the real needs of the community were not in production, but in organization, marketing, and increasing their political impact on government policies. It was not clear what the Canadians had to offer Nicaraguans in any of these areas.

The crisis in El Astillero pushed OXFAM-Canada to rethink its strategy. It eventually decided to withdraw from involvement at the community level and to focus on supporting attempts to organize inshore fishermen at the regional and national levels. In 1992, with OXFAM's support, nine regional unions of fish-

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A young woman builds a bicycle wheel at ECOBICI, a project of the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology.

ing cooperatives formed the National Federation of Inshore Fishermen (FENICPESCA). Although organizationally still weak, the capacity of the fishermen to represent their interests *vis-à-vis* the state has increased substantially. The fishermen have also organized to market their fish collectively, rather than rely on the state or large private buyers. Though much work remains to be done, the boats of El Astillero are now returning to the sea, and their owners have more secure access to markets.

The story of El Astillero illustrates many of the dilemmas faced by Northern NGOs throughout Latin America. First, paternalism has not disappeared, even though many NGOs like OXFAM recognize the problem and have tried to eliminate it. As a subsequent evaluation of the program at El Astillero noted, OXFAM's approach reflected the wrong-headed assumption that modern technology could solve "Third World" problems. Since Latin American agencies are reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them, needed program changes are often slow in coming.

Similarly, direct people-to-people linkages between groups of the North and South may not be the best way to promote development. "Perhaps it was wrong to think that primary producers know best what other primary producers needed in terms of development," one organizer reflected. "We forgot that it was their first exposure to Third World issues too, and that they too needed to learn about development strategies."<sup>2</sup> Although exchanges are an important way to educate people in the North about development issues, it cannot be assumed that people in similar situations in the North and South have the same interests and needs. Even if they are poor and marginalized within their own countries, groups from the North cannot automat-

ically transfer their experiences and knowledge to the South.

Finally, as OXFAM learned, long-term success requires moving beyond the local community to confront broader economic and political structures at the national and international levels. The El Astillero project stumbled at first because it did not adequately take into account the national socioeconomic framework in which the fishing cooperatives operated.

In the wake of structural adjustment and the widespread decline of faith in state-led development strategies, both Latin American governments and Northern donors are increasingly turning to NGOs. NGOs are seen as a way not only to fill the gap caused by cutbacks in state services, but also as a way to contribute to democratization through support for civil society. The 1993 *Human Development Report* of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) argues, for example, that governments need to find new ways to give people greater influence and participation in decision-making:

Unless this is done, and done in time, the irresistible tide of people's rising aspirations will inevitably clash with inflexible systems, leading to anarchy and chaos. A rapid democratic transition and a strengthening of the institutions of civil society are the only appropriate responses.<sup>3</sup>

Reliable statistics on total amounts of NGO assistance to Latin America are difficult to find. According to the UNDP, total Northern NGO aid increased from \$1.0 billion in 1970 to \$7.2 billion in 1990. NGOs are increasingly on the receiving end as well. In Central America alone, some 4,000 NGOs currently receive an estimated \$350 million annually from all sources.<sup>4</sup> During the 1980s, the growth rate of official aid to Southern NGOs was almost five times higher than the growth in governmental development assistance.<sup>5</sup>

Several different types of organizations are involved in this growing phenomenon:

i) *Northern NGOs*: These are non-profit organizations based in North America and Europe. They fund, and sometimes implement, development projects, usually in more than one country. They receive money both from governments and private donations. In the United States, they are often referred to as Private Voluntary Organizations (PVOs).

ii) *Southern NGOs*: These are non-profit organizations based in Asia, Africa and Latin America, whose principal function is to implement development projects favoring the poor.<sup>6</sup> Northern NGOs are the main source of financial support for Southern NGOs, but they may also receive assistance from Northern governments or international organizations. Both Southern and Northern NGOs are typically staffed by mid-



Women participate in a community-organized program to distribute bread and milk to schoolchildren in Perquin, El Salvador.

dle-class professionals who provide technical support, training and financial support to communities. Southern NGOs serve as intermediaries between the grassroots and government, Northern NGOs, and international financial institutions.

iii) *Popular organizations*: Popular organizations are composed of members, to whom they are in some way accountable. They include neighborhood associations, agricultural cooperatives, peasant unions, and women's groups. They may get support from state agencies, international NGOs or national NGOs, though many receive no external funding.

Political scientist Charles Anderson once referred to Latin American politics as a "living museum," in which new political actors appeared on the scene, but the old ones refused to disappear.<sup>7</sup> Latin American NGOs are very similar. In general, they have evolved from providing charity and relief, into community organizing and local development, and more recently toward lobbying and advocacy work. The older types of NGOs, however, continue to coexist with the newer forms, and probably control more money.<sup>8</sup>

The boom in NGO aid has been fueled by the reputation of NGOs as paragons of development action. This reputation comes from their small size, efficiency, moral commitment to the cause of helping the poorest, their proximity to the grassroots, and the high levels of popular participation. NGOs are seen as people-to-people organizations capable of creating direct links between people in the North and South, thus providing a human face to the problems of development. Because of their small scale, NGOs can be more flexible and innovative than bilateral or multilateral aid agencies, and therefore are often a source of alternative development strategies.<sup>9</sup>

In recent years, however, doubts have emerged about the real impact of assistance from Northern

NGOs to their Southern counterparts. The apparent virtues of NGOs tend to obscure the real problems even the most well-meaning and effective NGOs encounter in attempting to promote development. The virtuous image creates unrealistic expectations about the possibility of quick fixes if only aid is directed to people at the grassroots. In most of Latin America, the cards are stacked against the poor, and NGO activity can do little in the short term to reshuffle the deck. Shifting responsibility for the welfare of the poor away from the state (which at least has the capacity to do something about it) onto civil society is problematic. Moreover, NGOs are a varied lot, with diverse motivations and ideological perspectives. Needless to say, not all do useful work.

In Central America, political polarization has led to the emergence of two distinct kinds of NGOs: neoliberal and progressive. A group of progressive Central American NGOs, the *Concertación Regional de Organismos de Desarrollo*, describes the difference between the two accordingly:

The difference lies in how they view the problem of power. In the first case, the activity of the NGO is directed at provoking changes in order to avoid modifications in the structure of power. In the second case, the NGOs try to promote changes in order to achieve transformations in the relation of social forces, in a manner which favors the majority.<sup>10</sup>

Both types of NGO are responding to the needs of large marginalized populations who lack economic alternatives. Their objectives and political agendas, however, are very different. Neoliberal NGOs advocate the merits of market-led strategies for economic recovery. They see their role as assuaging the worst suffering caused by economic structural adjustment, in order to ensure social stability. These NGOs may claim to support community development, but they tend to favor individualistic solutions to the economic crisis.

Neoliberal NGOs are flourishing throughout Central America under the auspices of multilateral financial institutions. According to a World Bank official, the financial institutions "are beginning to see NGOs as important vehicles for dissemination and constituency-building for a variety of macroeconomic efforts including structural-adjustment programs."<sup>11</sup> Moeen Qureshi, senior vice-president of the World Bank, says the Bank considers NGOs "important coworkers in a common cause."<sup>12</sup> In a typical case from El Salvador, U.S.AID, together with the World Bank, UNDP, and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), has helped establish a Salvadoran Social Investment Fund (*Fondo de Inversión Social Salvadoreña* or FISS). As in other countries of the region, the fund pays for projects meant to alleviate the worst effects of structural-adjust-

ment programs on the poorest. The FISS is notably selective in choosing its NGO collaborators. "The limited effort to create a framework to incorporate NGOs into the FISS," says one observer, "reflects government policy to work only with NGOs with proven links to business groups, and the IDB's relative inexperience with welfare-orientated NGOs."<sup>13</sup> Not surprising, the NGOs allied with the popular sectors during the 1980s

have found themselves largely shut out of government plans for postwar reconstruction.

Even if they claim to support popular participation, neoliberal NGOs are usually interventionist and paternalistic. Local participation is often limited to providing voluntary labor so that development projects can be implemented more cheaply. In one particularly egregious example, after the 1990 election in

## The Evolution of Latin American NGOs

In Latin America, NGOs have historical roots in the Catholic Church's fear of social unrest. In the 1950s, the Church established *Cáritas*, a social-assistance organization composed mainly of Catholic laypeople, in various countries of the region. Gradually, European and North American NGOs tied to the Church began channelling funds to Latin American groups.<sup>1</sup> The Catholic Church, the most powerful organization in Latin American civil society, thus played a crucial role in the formation and linking together of international and national NGOs.

In the 1960s, traditional developmental theory came under heavy criticism from Latin American academics and activists. Particularly important was the emergence of liberation theology with its advocacy of critical reflection and political action by the poor organized in grassroots communities. Rodrigo Egaña, a Chilean former NGO activist, argues that during the 1960s Latin American NGOs began to embrace new "paradigms," based in such concepts as "popular education," "support for organizational processes," and "conscientization." According to Egaña, these new NGOs combined "Freireian ideas about cultural action, Marxist ideas about society and the state, and the visions of the dependency theorists about the relations between developed and underdeveloped countries."<sup>2</sup>

Latin American NGO strategies were also shaped by the wave of military coups in the Southern Cone in the 1960s and 1970s. Since military dictatorships banned traditional forms of political representation like political parties, the NGO became one of the few available forms of organization in civil society. According to Chilean social scientist Sergio Spoerer, the NGOs which emerged substituted for the "democratic actors and struggles which were weakened or prohibited." "This same climate," he says, "created a perception of NGOs that they represented a sphere of action defined not as non-governmental, but by their potential to be anti-governmental."<sup>3</sup> Unlike most Northern NGOs, Latin

American NGOs thus saw their work as highly political, oriented toward the needs of the popular movement and to supporting the capacity of the poor to survive, organize, and resist state power.

The Reagan Administration's policy of low-intensity warfare in Central America in the 1980s politicized NGO activities in a different way. The U.S. government channelled money to friendly NGOs for food distribution, health care, and projects for rural development and displaced persons, all of which were integrated with military counterinsurgency campaigns.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, solidarity organizations and progressive Northern NGOs supported Central American NGOs linked

with the popular movements—and in the case of the solidarity organizations—with the revolutionary fronts.

With the emergence of democratic regimes in Latin America over the course of the 1980s, older patterns of contestation between NGOs and governments have been superseded by possibilities for cooperation. For example, after the Aylwin Administration took power in Chile in 1990, NGOs were confronted with a new situation in which the government sought their participation in its

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socioeconomic development plans. As elsewhere in Latin America, a social-investment fund was created in Chile—called FOSIS—to channel money through NGOs to promote local development. Former NGO leaders like Rodrigo Egaña were recruited into the public sector. Some NGO activists now fear that this type of cooptation may lead to the end of the progressive NGO as a distinctive organization. —LM

1. FAO-FFHC, "NGOs in Latin America: Their Contribution to Participatory Democracy," *Development: Seeds of Change*, Vol. 4 (1987), pp. 100-5.
2. Quoted in Leilah Landim, "ONGs y estado en América Latina," unpublished document, February, 1988, p. 9.
3. Sergio Spoerer, "Las organizaciones no-gubernamentales en la democratización de América Latina," *Documento de Trabajo* (Santiago, Chile: ILET, n.d.), p. 11.
4. Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Central America Fact Book* (Albuquerque: Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center, 1986), p. 48.

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In the wake of structural adjustment, the "alternative" strategies advocated by progressive NGOs often end up looking not too different from those of neoliberal groups.

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Nicaragua, one large Northern NGO funded a food-for-work program run by the right-wing municipal government of Managua. Workers were hired, among other things, to paint over the large, colorful murals on city buildings which had become a symbol of support for the revolution.

By contrast, progressive NGOs in both the North and the South define their main objective as altering the political and economic balance of forces within their societies, often through empowerment of people at the grassroots. In Guatemala City, for example, numerous women's organizations are engaged in such diverse activities as establishing a Pap-smear clinic, sexual-education talks, legal advocacy for abused women, and a drop-in center for prostitutes. Although these groups do not call themselves feminist, they aim through popular education to increase women's self-confidence and their capacity to participate in community organizations.<sup>14</sup>

In general, progressive Northern NGOs (many of which are based in Western Europe or Canada) do not directly implement their own projects but provide support for local NGOs or popular organizations with which they have developed a long-term relationship. As much as possible, local partners establish priorities for work, and are given control over day-to-day decision-making.

In the face of the broader constraints of the international market, structural adjustment, state policy, and the general political bias against the interests of small producers, the "alternative" strategies advocated by progressive NGOs often end up looking not too different from those of neoliberal groups. This neoliberal-progressive convergence can be seen in the examples of two NGOs from Costa Rica. The first is Catholic Relief Services (CRS), a mainstream U.S. NGO which receives much of its funding from U.S.AID. CRS, the foreign-relief and development agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, focused on charity and welfare work in the 1950s. During the 1960s, CRS, like many other Northern NGOs, became frustrated with its failure to reduce

levels of poverty, and began to fund local small-scale development projects instead.

U.S.AID viewed NGOs in Costa Rica as a private sector alternative to state paternalism and as a "shock absorber" for social tensions in the context of the volatile Contra war raging to the country's north. In 1986, CRS began to provide organizational, technical and financial support to small farmers, primarily for the production of "nontraditional exports" such as ornamental plants, broccoli, macadamia nuts and cocoa. As part of this program, CRS established a project in Uvita to promote cocoa production among a group which was forming a cooperative.

From the start, the cooperative members had little input into the project. The project was designed and implemented according to the priorities of the Costa Rican government and international donors. Since the cooperative would forfeit CRS' aid if it decided to produce food for domestic consumption, the cooperative's role in the project's design was limited to making suggestions about which nontraditional export crop it should grow. General meetings of the cooperative were held only twice a year. In addition, since almost all cooperative members were men, women were automatically excluded from participating.

The problems of paternalism are not, however, limited to neoliberal NGOs. A similar cocoa-growing project in Costa Rica was funded by Agro Action, a German NGO, and implemented by CECADE, a progressive Costa Rican NGO. CECADE, formed by intellectuals associated with the Costa Rican left, was critical of existing models of cooperation between North and South. It preferred to work with agencies like Agro Action which took a hands-off approach and supported long-term development programs. CECADE was also closely aligned with one of the country's peasant unions, UPANACIONAL, and promoted political participation by peasants at both the local and national levels.

Unlike CRS, CECADE was critical of the country's structural-adjustment program, but, ironically, it also chose to promote cocoa production. Since the state had stopped subsidizing basic grains such as beans and corn, the peasants were looking for alternative crops. As the CECADE project revealed, the options open to NGOs are constrained by the broader political and economic context. If food crops aimed at the local market are no longer economically viable because of competition from cheap grains imported from the United States, small farmers may have little choice but to produce nontraditional exports. Peasants found it difficult to compete in this sector, however, because they lacked access to credit, markets, and processing facilities, and were vulnerable to the vagaries of the world market.



Bearing out these obstacles, both the CRS and the CECADE projects ran into problems when the world price of cocoa plummeted. The CECADE farmers eventually decided to replace the cocoa plants with other crops, while CRS decided to continue support for cocoa production, awaiting better prices.

As the examples of both CECADE and OXFAM-Canada show, even progressive NGOs strongly committed to grassroots participation face real problems in developing strategies which respond to local demands. Of key importance is the question of who makes the critical decisions about development—the community itself or the NGOs. “If development organizations—official or voluntary, Northern or Southern—are to make meaningful contributions toward alleviating poverty,” says John Clark, formerly of OXFAM-UK, “then they must learn to follow the people, not expect the people to follow them. The poor themselves know the capabilities of their communities, and know what needs to be done. Development is done *by* people, not *to* people.”<sup>15</sup>

This is easier said than done. After several years of working in the community, one CECADE promoter acknowledged how difficult it was to encourage genuine community participation. “It has been difficult to break with the paternalistic mentality,” he said. “The people expect us to arrange everything. They still don’t feel like the project is theirs.” This problem is exacerbated by the fact that NGOs—regardless of where they are based—tend to be made up of middle-class, usually urban, professionals. More often than not, the groups are hierarchical, and led by one dominant individual.

But like OXFAM-Canada, CECADE and Agro Action have learned from their mistakes and are responding to peasant demands. To its credit, CECADE has also consistently emphasized the importance of lobbying and advocacy work. In addition, the group has carried out extensive research on the impact of structural adjustment on peasants, which led to the development of policy recommendations by Costa Rican peasant organizations for a roundtable discussion with the government.

In order to bypass national NGOs, some Costa Rican peasant unions got together in 1991 to form a new organization, *Nuestra Tierra*. While acknowledging that progressive NGOs played an important role when the peasant movement was beginning to organize, Carlos Hernández, *Nuestra Tierra*’s director, argues that they have outlived their usefulness. “These national NGOs have gradually become an end in themselves,” he says, “and lost their original purpose, which was to help the popular organizations by channelling funds from the international NGOs. Their orig-



A Canadian fisherman holds up a fish at OXFAM-Canada’s project in El Astillero, Nicaragua.

inal sin was that they were born outside of the popular movement—from small groups of the left—not as a result of the suggestions of the popular movement.” Without doubt, the problems of representation are even more acute for Northern NGOs, who are yet another step removed from the grassroots.

In searching for alternative models of development for the hemisphere, North American progressives need to question the assumption that NGOs are necessarily allies in a common cause. When it comes to aid, small is not necessarily beautiful. In fact, assistance from Northern NGOs to small development projects can be even more dangerous than aid from state agencies because it penetrates into the very fibres of a community, creating new forms of clientelism and cooptation.

Yet NGOs do have an important role to play in promoting more participatory, egalitarian, and sustainable forms of development. In order to achieve these goals, however, Northern organizations must be flexible enough to learn from their mistakes, and to respond to the demands of the grassroots. Given the growth in numbers and competence of Latin American NGOs, Northern NGOs are rethinking their mandate and role. Creating direct people-to-people linkages is an important vehicle for stimulating political support in the North for social change. Lobbying, development education and advocacy work around issues like trade, structural adjustment and human rights, however, often better address the root causes of underdevelopment and poverty. While such work is usually less appealing to private donors in the North, it is more sharply aimed at the structural constraints which impede sustainable development and the alleviation of misery in Latin America. ■

# Parks, People and Power

## The Shifting Terrain of Environmentalism

In the wake of the 1988 assassination of Chico Mendes, the way Northern environmentalists talk about Latin American environmental problems began to change. The problem of the Brazilian Amazon has gone from being a story about ill-conceived and destructive developmentalist policies to one about injustice.

BY MARGARET E. KECK

At the first conference of the Brazilian Studies Association in Atlanta last year, a U.S. political scientist gave a paper on self-described environmental movements in the São Paulo area to a roomful of mainly U.S. academics and representatives of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). She talked about groups that have organized around waste, water and air pollution, noise, and other urban issues. The Brazilian organizations she described looked like the community and neighborhood environmental groups that have emerged in U.S. towns and cities, and in U.S. universities among student activists. The overwhelming response to her paper, however, was that she was not talking about the real environmental movement; the *real* environmentalists, her critics contended, were in poor peoples' movements—rubber tappers, indigenous peoples, river dwellers, people displaced by dams, and so forth. The authentic environmentalists in Brazil, in other words, were not people like themselves.

In fact, the Northern environmental movement has not mobilized in Latin America in response to the kinds of urban issues around which most Latin American environmentalists organize. With few exceptions, these problems are contested among predominantly domestic institutions and actors. No serious incentives exist either for foreign environmentalists to become involved, or for local activists to seek their involve-

ment. Exceptions occasionally arise in cases where foreign NGOs can provide specialized information and technical expertise. Although egregious environmental problems like the high incidence of anencephalic babies born in chemical-producing Cubatão, São Paulo have gotten a lot of international attention, no active international strategy has evolved around them. By contrast, international strategies have developed around protection of forests, species, and indigenous peoples.

North-South collaboration around environmental issues takes diverse forms, with increasingly complex interactions among a greater number and variety of actors in recent years. Although states still play the key role in the last instance, other interactions—among and between Northern NGOs, Latin American environmental movements, Latin American states, international organizations and multilateral development banks—have proliferated.<sup>1</sup> These interactions involve information flows, making it increasingly difficult for multilateral organizations to rely exclusively on "official" accounts.

In the wake of the December 1988 assassination of rubber tapper Chico Mendes, the way Northern environmentalists talk about Latin American environmental problems began to change. People began to debate the root causes—the "causal story"—of tropical deforestation, and particularly the role of poor people in determining the fate of the forest.<sup>2</sup> For some environmentalists, the problem of the Brazilian Amazon has gone from being a story about ill-conceived and destructive developmentalist policies to one about

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injustice; from a belief that expertise plus resources could solve most problems to a belief that only profound social change can do so. Poor people have gone from being part of the problem to being potential carriers of the solution. These changes coincided with a growing recognition on the part of conservation organizations that a "parks without people" policy was at the very least unrealistic, if not undesirable, and that effective conservation required attention to the needs and concerns of local populations.

**T**he international dimension of environmental politics in Latin America is nothing new, but until the 1980s was mainly the purview of net-

works of scientists. Like-minded professionals in the United States and Latin America collaborated to find solutions to issues of mutual concern. They came to know each other at professional conferences and at research sites, participated in working groups of UNESCO and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and developed strong commitments to particular natural areas. Such networks were central to the development of Costa Rica's parks policy, for example. Between 1962 and 1976, Costa Rican and foreign scientists laid the groundwork in ecological studies for the creation of the Corcovado park on the Osa peninsula, even in the face of considerable opposition from both land speculators and squatters' movements.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, when Paulo Nogueira Neto, a member of the IUCN executive board, became Brazil's first environmental secretary in 1973, he could call upon people like Tom Lovejoy, then of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), to help finance new protected areas.

Although they were often very politically savvy in pursuing their goals, the people in these networks considered themselves apolitical. Until recently, these scientists paid very little attention to the demands and needs of populations in and around the areas they sought to protect. For the scientists campaigning for the Corcovado basin, the land speculators trying to

profit from the area and the Communist Party-linked squatters' movements were equally problematic.

The new kinds of environmentalist organizations that came into being in Europe and the United States in the late 1960s and the 1970s differed from their predecessors in being concerned less with the conservation of natural areas than with the environmental ills of modern society. The new environmentalists sought harmony with nature. They believed that small was beautiful and that the individual should be valued over the big bureaucratic state. The difference between the anti-growth discourse of the new environmentalists and the hyper-developmental discourse of Third World leaders at the time was quite stark. In an influ-

ential formulation of the Third Worldist position in 1971, the Brazilian ambassador to the United States contrasted "the pollution of affluence" with the "pollution of poverty," accusing the industrial powers of wanting to use the environment to slow down Third World development in a new variant of imperialism.<sup>4</sup>

The "new" environmental movement did not take hold in most of Latin America until the 1980s, and only a small proportion took an anti-

growth stance [see "A Typology of Activism," p. 39]. They shared with their Northern counterparts a focus on decentralization and small-scale local initiatives. Latin American conservationists—like their counterparts elsewhere—wanted to rationalize growth, not slow it down. They often framed their appeals to protect natural areas in language about the national heritage. It was important, for instance, that the creation of Corcovado park be seen as a Costa Rican initiative. Opposition of Brazilian conservationists to some of the big transnational projects of the 1970s seems to have been as much a condemnation of the role of multinational capital as it was of the environmental consequences. It is important to recognize that developmentalist nationalism characterized both democratic and authoritarian regimes in the region during this period. But institutional changes in certain countries, especially regarding pollution control, helped to open



*Environmentalists march through New York in 1990, protesting against logging in the Brazilian Amazon.*

political space for domestic environmentalists active around urban issues to emerge. With a few exceptions—like José Lutzenberger's Gaucho Association for the Protection of the National Environment (AGAPAN) in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil—these organizations had virtually no international links.

Tropical deforestation first made it onto the international agenda with reference to Brazil. The military government's colonization and development initiatives in the early 1970s alarmed scientists, and the presidents of the IUCN and WWF protested to President Emílio Garrastazú Médici in 1972.<sup>5</sup> In early 1974, the IUCN sponsored an international meeting in Caracas to discuss guidelines for economic development in tropical-forest areas of Latin America. By August, 1974, the IUCN and WWF were calling tropical rainforests "the most important nature conservation program of the decade." In 1975, WWF launched a campaign to raise a million dollars for rainforest-conservation projects—equivalent to half of its entire 1974 project budget. Although the Carter Administration was supportive, these initiatives foundered in the face of Reagan's lack of interest and the refusal of important tropical-forest countries—including Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela—to participate in the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) meetings on the subject.

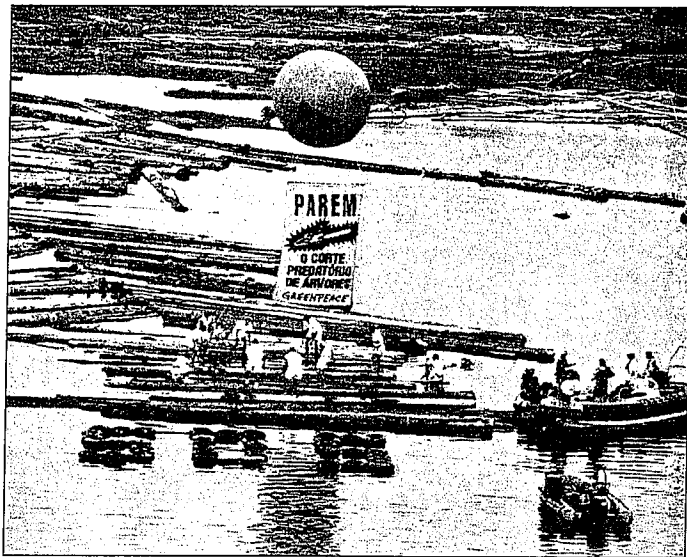
Reverberations of the North-South debates at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm combined with other influences to produce a new discourse on the relationship between conservation and development which by 1980 became known as "sustainable development." The concept has been defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>6</sup> This discourse—which tries to strike a balance between the demands of development and environmental conservation—was evident in the World Conservation Strategy, issued in 1980 by the IUCN and WWF, and in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development issued later in the decade.

The convergence between international organizing around indigenous rights and the environment also began in the mid-1970s. In practical terms, many conservation organizations—though not all—began to pay more attention to the people living in and around the parks they wanted to set up or preserve. Northern environmentalists began to recognize that for the parks to survive, these people had to be enlisted as allies, and not seen as enemies, as so often in the past. Recognition of links between the environmental and economic dimensions of underdevelopment was also central to the proposal by WWF's Tom Lovejoy in 1984 to establish debt-for-nature swaps. Although

this mechanism to finance park set-asides and conservationist NGOs in the Third World by taking advantage of the spread between discounted and face-value debt was never expected to do much to alleviate the Latin American debt crisis, its ability to finance conservation activities has also proven disappointing.

**T**he most recent phase of international attention to the

Amazon began in the 1980s. It has been energized by a campaign imagined in 1983 by a few Washington D.C. environmentalists to pressure multilateral development banks, especially the World Bank, to pay more attention to the environmental impact of their loans. The campaign's logic was that since the development banks have such a major impact on Third World development policies, changing their behavior was an efficient way of influencing practices that degraded the environment in the South. Ironically, the individuals who sparked this quite radical campaign came from large mainstream environmental-advocacy organizations such as the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Resources Defense Council, and the Sierra Club. Not only do these organizations' activities and budgets seldom relate to international activities, but their representatives have been able to hook up quietly with Latin American groups that espouse a social agenda which the organizations themselves might not endorse.



Greenpeace activists expose a lake in the Amazon that is stacked 20 meters deep with logs cut mostly for the U.S. plywood market.

An early focus of the campaign was the impact of the World Bank's Polonoroeste loan in the state of Rondônia, in the western part of the Brazilian Amazon, where a rapid and chaotic colonization process was causing massive deforestation. The Bank loan was intended to rationalize the colonization process, provide local infrastructure, and finance the creation of protected areas and the demarcation of indigenous reserves. Unfortunately, because its first act was to pave the road to the interior, the loan simply aggravated the problem.

In the early phases of the development bank campaign, groups in the Amazon and activists in Washington had little contact with one another. The Northern environmentalists got their information about what was going on in the Amazon region mainly through networks of anthropologists based in the south of Brazil. This situation changed in 1985 when through intermediaries the Northern activists established contact with Chico Mendes and the rubber tappers in the state of Acre. The rubber tappers had been fighting to defend their land-use rights for a decade, with support from the Catholic Church and the National Confederation of Rural Unions. These were the years of Brazil's transition to democracy, so the domestic context was also relatively favorable to Mendes' cause. By the early 1980s, social movements were emerging and supporting each other in a whole range of areas. In addition to blocking the chain saws in their signature tactic of direct action, the rubber tappers union won several important court cases on land rights. And with the help of anthropologists and other allies, they developed a project for extractive reserves that would guarantee their long-term access to land and livelihood. When the U.S. activists brought the project to the international community and it was endorsed by the multilateral development banks, the rubber tappers' hand was strengthened locally. This relationship gave the rubber tappers a voice in political arenas they could never have reached alone, and finally provided the Washington D.C. activists with an answer to the accusation that they were just a bunch of rich Northerners who cared more for trees than for people.

International interest in the Amazon exploded in the late 1980s for a variety of reasons. The release of satellite photos showing unprecedented burning of forest coincided with the July 1988 heat wave and drought in the United States that made the concept of global warming suddenly seem real to millions of people. In December, 1988, Chico Mendes was assassinated by gunmen hired by ranchers in the Xapuri region. To the astonishment of most Brazilians, his murder made the front page of the *New York Times*. Pressure on Brazil to stop burning forest, and inflam-

## A Typology of Activism

Solidarity has been a core value for religious, leftist and labor groups, signifying support for the struggles of people who, one way or another, are oppressed. After World War II, but especially since the 1960s, solidarity organizations have been joined by human rights organizations, which take a very different approach to the problem of saving lives. The solidarity and rights frameworks have been two of the main patterns on which international advocacy has taken place among non-governmental organizations. Although both involve relationships between oppressed peoples and those in a position to support them, there are important conceptual differences. Individuals are endowed with rights; communities are the repositories of solidarity. Solidarity involves a substantive dimension that rights-based activism does not: support based on a conviction that those supported are right. Human rights appeals, on the other hand, raise procedural claims: that violations of personhood or of accepted civil or legal norms and procedures are unacceptable regardless of the victim's beliefs.

Solidarity also involves a notion of risk-sharing. Activists make themselves vulnerable in some way as testimony to their belief in a sense of community with the victims of injustice. Although clearly many human rights activists pursue information at great personal risk, the human rights methodology has not included expressions of shared vulnerability.

Yet a third pattern of international advocacy, represented by traditional environmentalism as well as the activities of many UN agencies and mainstream NGOs, ignores the political conflicts inherent in the idea of sustainable development. In this current of activism, like-minded scientists or technocrats come together around a set of seemingly technical goals. Even when they recognize the social aspects of environmental problems, they approach them with technical, not political proposals.

The turn towards poor peoples' movements in North-South environmental networking and advocacy represents an interesting hybrid of solidarity and rights traditions, and marks a clear break with the apolitical approach of traditional environmentalism. On the one hand, the "new" environmentalists share with solidarity activists a strong belief that the cause on behalf of which they are fighting is just, and that the legitimacy of the struggle derives from the substantive justice of the cause. On the other hand, like rights activists, they are much more likely to focus their strategies on procedural or institutional facets of issues. —MK

matory statements by U.S. and European politicians about what the Brazilian government ought or ought not to be doing in the region produced a nationalist backlash in Brazil. The uproar also, however, led to institutional changes such as the consolidation of scattered agencies into IBAMA, the Brazilian equivalent of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Although the Brazilian government's rhetoric was similar to what it had been at the time of Stockholm, the context in which it was issued and received was quite different. In 1972, the first leg of the Transamazon Highway had just been inaugurated; in 1988, the highway was virtually impassable and lined with abandoned colonization projects. In 1972, Brazil was in the midst of an economic miracle; in 1988, during the "lost decade," xenophobia rang false. In 1972, the notion that Brazil was speaking with one voice at Stockholm was—despite the military repression—credible; in 1988, Brazil no longer spoke with one voice. In 1972, Brazil enjoyed a widespread consensus on developmentalism with only a very small sector of the scientific community apparently worried about the colonization of Amazonia; in 1988,

within and outside the country, consensus on the developmentalist model had disappeared, and democratization had allowed debate to flourish. Within Brazil as well as outside, the Chico Mendes case made transparent both the structure of repressive social relations in Acre and the fragility of the rule of law. Finally, unlike in 1972, by 1988 environmental-movement organizations had sprung up in Brazil around a wide range of primarily urban issues. These groups, and those influenced by them, were able to channel some of the increased interest in the Amazon into an effort to strengthen domestic environmentalism more generally.

**W**hile the Brazilian government has been a pariah to environmentalists, the Costa Rican government has been one of the movement's darlings. Costa Rica has over 20% of its

land in some kind of conservation. Ecotourism is the third-highest income earner in the country, after coffee and bananas. In 1990, U.S. environmental NGOs helped to broker a deal that many have hailed as a new and more equitable approach to biodiversity conservation. The September 1991 agreement between the U.S.-based pharmaceutical company Merck and the Costa Rican environmental NGO INBio (Instituto Nacional de Biodiversidad) to finance collection of biological specimens for a period of two years (later renewed) was touted as a model arrangement by which Third World countries would receive the compensation they deserve for First World exploitation of their resources.

Merck paid INBio \$1.1 million upfront, with a promise of royalties if commercial products were developed as a result of the specimens collected. Half the royalties would go to the Costa Rican government for conservation programs; of the original \$1.1 million, INBio gave \$100,000 to the government for park conservation. At the same time, the government gave INBio's specimen collectors the right to prospect for species in national parks. Although INBio was to train local people in taxonomy so they could do this



*A taxonomist collects samples in a Costa Rican national park for a biodiversity-prospecting project financed by the Merck pharmaceutical company.*

work, as of mid-1993 only 15 people had been trained. The project has been enormously successful in increasing the number of known species in Costa Rica. Its commercial prospects, however, remain uncertain. Product development to the point of producing royalties will take an estimated 15 years.<sup>7</sup>

The Merck-INBio accord is just one facet of the broader trend in Costa Rica towards privatizing the management of environmental resources. As the Costa Rican state has downsized in recent years, it has also handed over more and more park maintenance functions to NGOs. The results have been relatively effective park management, but a lack of a broader "public" policy context.<sup>8</sup> However much NGOs have contributed to the conservation of the country's natural areas, the INBio agreement goes quite far in privatizing what are best thought of as public goods.

The Brazilian and Costa Rican examples show two different dynamics present in international environmental relations. These dynamics are competing for hegemony within the broader framework of a sustainable-development dialogue. Collaboration among environmentalists regarding Costa Rica began and remains strongest in scientific and technical networks. Although these networks have begun to take seriously the need to involve local people in park protection, they are not committed to allowing local people to establish priorities. Local participation can be considered if unexpected or unintended difficulties in park maintenance arise down the road. Collaboration between Costa Rican and U.S. environmentalists, for the time being however, is between people who are like each other, and who share worldviews and goals.

This type of collaboration takes place in Brazil as well, and in terms of funding, represents the lion's share of financial transfers from the United States to Brazilian NGOs. The developments set in motion by Chico Mendes' murder, however, reinforced an alternative interpretation of social relations to the one prevalent in the Costa Rican case. During the late 1980s, a number of new stories changed the image of the poor from victim of, or unwitting contributor to environmental degradation, to bearer of potential solutions. The Chico Mendes story was one of the most important of these new stories. Others included the Chipko movement in Uttar Pradesh, India that, starting in 1973, mounted non-violent resistance to the felling of community forests, the Penan people in Sarawak, Malaysia who have rallied against the logging of the rainforest that they inhabit, the struggles of tribal peoples in the Narmada River Valley in India (the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat) to stop construction of a vast dam complex that would flood their lands, and the Green Belt movement in Kenya that combines ecological action with a struggle for women's empowerment. These stories offered a new angle on environment and equity issues that moved them from the terrain of North-South inter-governmental relations to that of struggles for social justice within nations.

This shift—which is still emerging—has had implications for international relations among NGOs in particular. Northern NGOs that want to work on environment and equity issues now interact much more with social-development NGOs in the South than they do

with environmental NGOs. They work together with a whole variety of social movements that are not explicitly environmental—and even go so far as to deny the authenticity of the environmental organizations that are most like themselves.

Although this provides poor peoples' movements in Latin America with potentially important allies, it also tends to reproduce structural inequities within North-South environmental relations since all the money comes from the North, and all the legitimization from the South. The same struggles are defined in quite different ways by different organizations, which may not necessarily want to enter into the same alliances. This also tends to produce a stereotypical view of poor people—as saviors rather than destroyers of the forest, for

example—which is often hard to reconcile with the messier reality of real communities. The Kayapo indigenous people in the Brazilian Amazon, for example, have won international attention for struggles against dams, but at the same time sell timber and mining rights. Despite these drawbacks, environmental-social alliances constitute a framework within which new understandings can be negotiated.

Those accustomed to the clear pictures of good and bad that tended to characterize solidarity politics will be uncomfortable with the kinds of issue networks that have arisen around environmental issues. However much their campaigns may provide "road maps" through complicated terrain, the environ-

mental movement remains full of organizations and individuals with different goals, and of strange bedfellows who unite for one purpose but ferociously oppose each other on other issues.

Among environmentalists in Latin America and in the United States, strikingly different interpretations of reality intermingle and compete within the more general compromise framework of sustainable development. There is neither a single Northern nor a single Southern position. In its essence, the notion of sustainable development begs the question of blame and responsibility for environmental degradation, and allows North-South inequities to stand proxy for inequities within countries. Clearly these inequities are not the same thing. But the very fuzziness of "sustainable development" may offer a space in which new relationships can be negotiated over time, and may prevent premature closure and polarization around these issues. ■

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The Merck-INBio  
biodiversity-  
prospecting accord is  
just one facet of the  
broader trend in  
Costa Rica toward  
privatizing the  
management of  
environmental  
resources.

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### Active Engagement

1. The largest solidarity organization, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), was an avowedly partisan group supporting the electoral efforts of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). It thus operated outside of the nonpartisan USCEOM coalition, sending its own group of 150 election observers. Because of its special role, the Center for Global Education (CGE) is not covered elsewhere in this article, though it certainly merits mentioning as a major vehicle for contact between North and Central Americans in the 1980s. Based at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, the CGE is an educational exchange institution responsible for bringing thousands of people to El Salvador and Nicaragua from 1982 on. More recently, it has extended its programs to many other parts of the Third World, and is a major example of solidarity's long-term strength. I attended the U.S. Embassy reception as a member of USCEOM, representing the Center for Democracy in the Americas.
2. If one defines an "activist" as someone who participates in at least one activity every month (a meeting, vigil, letter-writing session or phonebank), the figure would probably be more like 10,000. The Central America Resource Center in Austin, Texas published several directories of local committees. In 1987 they listed 900 groups, but my personal experience, in CISPES' National Office and then in New Jersey's Central America Network (NICAN) from 1985 on, suggests there were many more groups attached to the solidarity movement. In the suburban Garden State, with roughly 1/30th the country's population, NICAN had 60 groups on its mailing list at peak, though far fewer came to its meetings and maintained a high level of activism; the number of activists oscillated somewhere between 200 and 500, depending on other political crises. My own estimate of perhaps 2,000 local groups nationally, averaging five to ten members each, attempts to balance the bigger urban committees with the stray religious and peace groups spread across the hinterland, which often consisted of only a handful of people.
3. I emphasize here the Central America movement's inability to mobilize large numbers in the streets, in comparison to the hundreds of thousands who rallied for various peace, anti-nuclear, pro-choice, civil rights and gay/lesbian causes during the 1980s. However, the nine years separating the various protests named in this paragraph is one indication of the movement's most important and, in contemporary terms, most distinctive feature—its sheer staying power. While the campaign for a Nuclear Freeze may have pulled a million people onto the streets of New York City in June, 1982, within two years it was largely a spent force. In the long run, the Central America solidarity movement's tenacity proved at least as important as its ability to organize mass demonstrations—and an effective response to the strategy of "low intensity warfare" that was intended, among other things, to avoid stimulating mass visible protests in the United States.
4. See Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993).
5. See Carol Brightman and Sandra Levinson, eds., *Venceremos Brigade: Young Americans Sharing the Life and Work of Revolutionary Cuba* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), a collective memoir and oral history of the first two brigades, for an illuminating and often painful tableau of the late New Left.
6. Three of these missionaries promptly became part of the Catonsville Nine, a group of Catholics who destroyed draft records and, led by the Berrigan brothers, stimulated a wave of militant, nonviolent Catholic action against the apparatus of the war in Indochina. For a powerful first-hand account of this radicalization process in Guatemala, see Thomas and Marjorie Melville, *Whose Heaven? Whose Earth?* (New York: Knopf, 1971).
7. See Gosse, "'El Salvador is Spanish for Vietnam': The Politics of Solidarity and the New Immigrant Left," in Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds., *The Immigrant Left* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) for a detailed treatment of solidarity in the 1970s, and the general question of exile influence and leadership in solidarity movements since the 1950s.
8. For a detailed account of the anti-intervention lobby's founding, see Charles DeBenedetti with Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 277-383.
9. Here and below I am essentially summarizing Gosse, "'The North American Front': Central American Solidarity in the Reagan Era," in Michael Sprinker and Mike Davis, eds., *Reshaping the U.S. Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980's, Volume III of The Year Left* (New York: Verso, 1988), pp. 11-50.
10. Witness for Peace has maintained itself since the end of the Cold and Contra wars, extending into Guatemala and Haiti. See Edward Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991) for a fine, insider account of this key organization.
11. See the articles by Diane Green, Julie Meyer, Margie Swedish, Aquiles Magana, Kathleen Kenney, Philip E. Wheaton, Dave Dyson, Mike Zielinski and Van Gosse in the special "El Salvador ¡Presente!" issue of *Crossroads* (April, 1994), edited by Michael S. Wyman.
12. See Renny Golden and Michael McConnell, *Sanctuary: The New Underground Railroad* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), for an account by leaders of the Chicago Religious Task Force. Also Ann Crittenden, *Sanctuary* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988) for the Tucson story.
13. For an authoritative treatment of the practical politics of this issue, see Cynthia Arnsperg, *Crossroads: Congress, the President and Central America, 1976-1993* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

### A Mixed Blessing

1. Diane Fournier and Bernard Martin, "Report of the Evaluation of the Atlantic Fisheries Linkage Project and the L'Acadie Project," prepared for OXFAM-Canada's Atlantic Regional Board and the Central America Work Team, May, 1991.
2. Diane Fournier and Bernard Martin, "Report of the Evaluation."
3. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 5.
4. Tim Dralmin, "Potential for Partnership: International Cooperation Institutions and Canadian and Latin American NGOs," discussion paper prepared for the International Development Research Center, Ottawa, Ontario, July, 1994, p. 12.
5. Alan Fowler, "Distant Obligations: Speculations on NGO Funding and the Global Market," *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 55, p. 15.
6. Mario Padrón, quoted in Leilah Landim, "Non-governmental Organizations in Latin America," *World Development*, Vol. 15, Supplement (Autumn, 1987), p. 31.
7. Charles W. Anderson, "Toward a Theory of Latin American Politics," in Howard J. Wiarda, ed., *Politics and Social Change in Latin America: The Distinct Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982).
8. See David C. Korten, "Third-generation NGO strategies: A Key to People-centred Development," *World Development*, Vol. 15, Supplement (Autumn, 1987), pp. 145-59; and David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1990). See also Brian H. Smith, *More Than Altruism: The Politics of Private Foreign Aid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), chapters 2-4 for a more complete description of the evolution of U.S., European and Canadian NGOs.
9. Tim Dralmin, "Potential for Partnership," p. 12.
10. Concertación Centroamericana de Organismos de Desarrollo, "Memoria: Reunión de organismos no-gubernamentales para la constitución de la Concertación Centroamericana de Organismos de Desarrollo," unpublished document, San José, November, 1988, pp. 24-5.
11. Quoted in Esquel Group Foundation, "Civil Society, State and Market: An Emerging Partnership for Equitable Development," presented to the Social Forum convened by the Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, Washington, D.C., February 10-13, 1993, p. 8.
12. Moeen Qureshi, "The World Bank and NGOs: New Approaches," remarks before the Washington chapter of the Society for International Development conference on "Learning from the Grassroots," unpublished document, Atlanta, April, 1992.

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13. Peter Sollis, quoted in Francisco Alvarez Solís and Pauline Martin, "The Role of Salvadoran NGOs in Post-war Reconstruction," *Development in Practice* Vol. 2, No. 2 (June, 1992), p. 108.
14. Cathy Blacklock, "Reading Political Practices: Women's Contestation of Human Rights in Guatemala," prepared for the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Calgary, Alberta, June 12-14, 1994.
15. John Clark, *Democratizing Development: The Role of Voluntary Organizations* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1990), p. xi.

### Parks, People and Power

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1. Since NGO is a negative definition that reflects a state-centric view of international relations, its burgeoning use as a sort of catch-all for organizations blurs the complexity of relationships among them. I use the term to refer to professionalized organizations, with budgets, regular (normally paid) staff, and fundraising capacity.
2. On causal stories, see Deborah A. Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (1989), pp. 281-300.
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4. João Augusto de Araujo Castro, "Environment and Development: The Case of the Developing Countries," *International Organization*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Spring, 1972).

5. "The Opening Up of Brazil," *IUCN Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 5 (May, 1972), p. 18.
6. The World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 43.
7. The Merck-INBio agreement has been widely discussed in the press. See Roberto Herrscher, "Latin America: Third World Biodiversity is North's 'Green Gold,'" *InterPress Service*, April 22, 1993 (from Nexis).
8. Lisa Fernandez, "Non-government Environmental Organizations and the State in Costa Rica," Yale University, May, 1993, unpublished.

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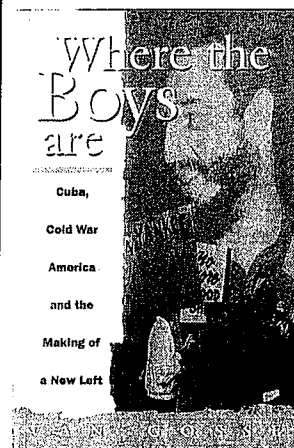
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