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Spring 1985

## Monthly Planet, 1985, Spring

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# MONTHLY PLANET

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## Planet People

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## Editor's Note

Hi, Planet lovers! In this issue we have teamed up with the people of CISPES (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador.) They have written most of this issue's articles. The writers are people who have been to Central America and are now sharing with you their observations and perspectives from first-hand experience. Regardless of your political stand on the issues surrounding Central America, there is insight to be gained from an exploration of the "reality" of our neighbors to the south.

So, as you relax in your armchair, enjoy the accuracy of these accounts and the shadowy humor of the cartoons.

May you be guided to truth and graced with understanding.

## To Our Readers

The *Monthly Planet* is a publication that strives to inform, entertain and stimulate thought on environmental issues. We, the MP staff, know that environmental interest and concern is not confined to just the experts and the radicals. By broadening the focus of the *Planet* we hope to appeal to a community-wide audience. Let us know what you like or would like to see in the *Planet*; reader participation is invited in all aspects of its publication.

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## Choosing to Act

Karen Flinn

**T**oday for the first time in the history of the United States, many churches, organizations, and communities are choosing to offer sanctuary to people pursued by the law. As a result, a growing number of people are facing the issues that are involved in this choice. This sanctuary movement refers specifically to the help that is being provided to Central American fugitives from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, who are fleeing to the United States to escape the problems in their own countries. Presently, there are approximately 350,000 fugitives in the U.S., with an estimated 10,000 in Washington State alone. Most of these people are concentrated in Eastern Washington. The Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, a group that is a major part of the sanctuary movement, claims over 180 sanctuary churches, and around 1000 supporting churches in the nation. The Seattle area has 6 declared sanctuaries - the latest is the University Unitarian Fellowship in Seattle, which voted to become a sanctuary in March. In Bellingham, the Campus Christian Ministry has become interested in the movement and the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship recently voted to publicly endorse the Sanctuary movement.

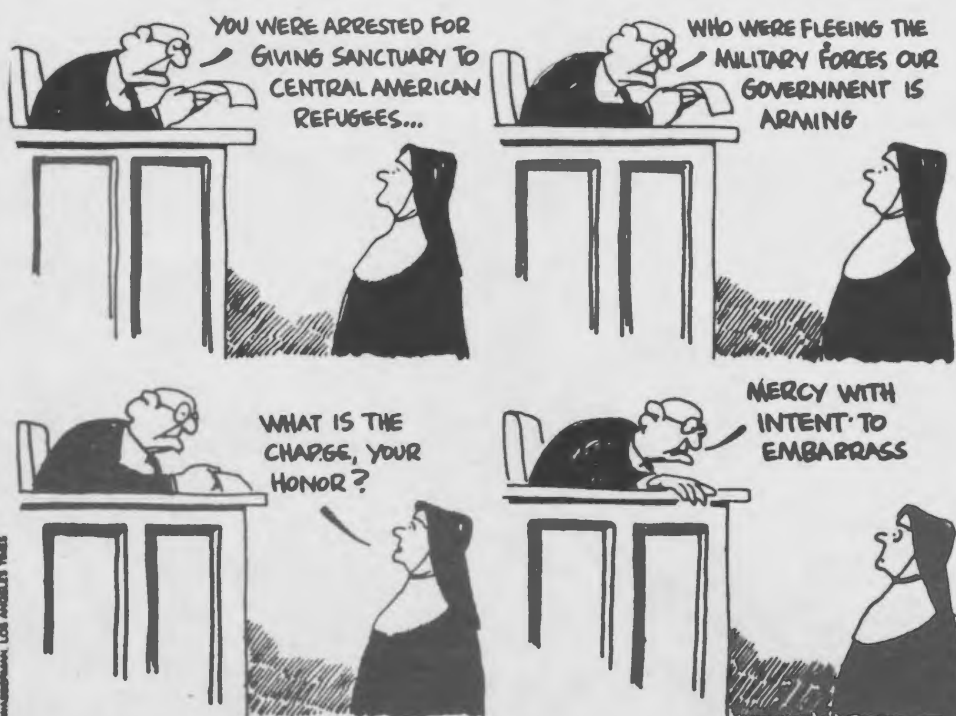
As each church or community group makes its decision on the Sanctuary movement, many personal, legal, and moral issues have to be resolved by individual members. Ann Nugent of the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, spoke of a year long educational

process in which the congregation became involved - in order to reach a vote and conclusion that came from beyond just listening. Genjo Marinello of the University Friends Meeting, a declared Sanctuary in Seattle, said that although his church had been providing sanctuary "unofficially" for over a year, it took his congregation 5 months before to reach a consensus and publicly declare themselves a sanctuary.

Obviously, to provide refugees with sanctuary is not a matter to be taken lightly. One major issue is the legality of Sanctuary, which depends on the status of the immigrant. The definition of "refugee" given by the 1951 United Nations Convention and adopted by the 1967 Protocol - signed by the United States, applies to an individual who "owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political organization, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself to the protection of that country . . ." A person in this circumstance is entitled to, at minimum, temporary asylum.

Accounts of brutality and horror reported by Central Americans and visitors to Central America testify that, by definition, these people are refugees. Raphael, a Central American refugee who spoke at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Bellingham on April 21st, explained why he left his country. On a day when he was away from home, about 60 soldiers arrived at his home searching for arms; they found no weapons. However, his name was on a list and the soldiers considered it their duty to kill him. A friend

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# Campus Invasion: Students Under Siege

Nancy Uding

**Y**ou are walking across Red Square on a nice, sunny day. It is the end of the quarter and you're finished with finals. You see other students scurrying across campus on their way to their last finals.

You hear a helicopter. You're used to helicopters, so you don't think anything of it. But it sounds close. Suddenly, you hear shouting, guns firing. The noise sounds like it's coming from Arntzen Hall and the E.S. Building. You look up the walkway. There's the helicopter. It swoops down on a student as she is running, bullets hitting the bricks beside her. You are surrounded by the sounds of panic, shouting, footsteps, gunfire, and more helicopters. Students are running out into the square to see what is happening. Armed combat troops run down the stairs by Wilson Library and into Red Square, tanks behind them. Students are screaming, you see two of them shot down in front of the Humanities Building. You run for cover. Another student holding a Bible is screaming for God to help him. Bullets go into his side, knocking him down to the ground. The troops spread out, they run off to all parts of campus. You are grabbed by the arm, pulled out into Red Square. You are told to lie down on your face with your hands over your head. You hear a helicopter land. More students are ordered to lie beside you on the bricks. Later, you are forced to leave campus along with all the other students and teachers. You ask yourself, why?

It is difficult to imagine this scenario at WWU, it is not for students at the University of El Salvador, because this is where it really happened. On June 26, 1980, the armed forces of El Salvador invaded UES, killing sixteen students and sixty nearby slum dwellers. For the next four years, until May of 1984, the U. was occupied by these armed forces. No faculty, students, staff, or administration were allowed on campus during those years, and an estimated twenty to thirty million dollars worth of damage was done to the university.

Why? I asked myself this question over and over as I walked across the San Salvador and Santa Ana campuses of UES, and I talked to students, teachers, and staff, as I looked at the results of the 4 years of military occupation at the U. I ask myself this question every time I walk across Red Square and think about what it would be like if the same thing happened here, at WWU.

I travelled to El Salvador in January, 1985 with a delegation of university students from the West Coast of the United States. We were invited by the University of El Salvador, to witness and document the university's condition after its reopening, to meet the people who study and teach under these conditions, people who were at UES on June

26, 1980, and people who strive for and believe in higher education in a country immersed in war.

The University of El Salvador was founded in the 1800's and is El Salvador's largest university. It has 3 campuses; the largest is in San Salvador, the other 2 are in Santa Ana and San Miguel. Its normal enrollment is about 30,000 students. It is the national university of El Salvador, and being a public institution, it attempts to provide higher education to all sectors of the population. UES produces the majority of El Salvador's doctors, teachers, lawyers, scientists, and agricultural experts. UES has traditionally been an autonomous institution, meaning that it governs itself. This status is granted the university by law. This autonomy allows for academic freedom: freedom of expression, freedom for people to study what they want, freedom to teach what they want, freedom to say what they want.

El Salvador is a country fraught with problems: acute poverty, inadequate health care and education for its population, and a brutal military and far right government which have killed over 50,000 people since 1979. Now El Salvador is in the middle of a civil war which the Salvadoran military (aided by the United States government) is taking to the air. Civilian targets are being bombed with iron fragmentation bombs, napalm, and white phosphorous. UES, because of its autonomous status, has attempted to provide an environment in which these problems can be studied, and eventually solved. The government and military have been critiqued and analyzed by people at the university over the years. This critical thought which comes out of the U., and the attitude of commitment to solving the country's economic and social problems, is considered by the Salvadoran military to be subversive. When one asks the government of El Salvador, or the military "why?"; "why invasion; why occupation of a public university; why destruction of the resources needed to train educated people?" the answer one receives is that the university is a center of subversion, that it harbors guerilla troops, that it is a threat to national security.

As I walked through campus at UES, I saw the fruits of the military's efforts to correct this "threat of national security." I saw classrooms with the roofs ripped off, windows broken, and walls caved in. I saw piles of soot — the ashes of thousands of burnt books, and libraries with empty shelves where those books used to be. I saw the burnt, gutted remains of what used to be the largest humanities library in Central America. I visited the Medical School and Law School and met students who said over and over again, "They destroyed everything, we have nothing." I walk through what used to be the university-run Medical Clinic, saw wiring pulled out of ceilings and walls, bullet holes in the bricks. I went to a microbiology

lab where the students were using one microscope for a class of 25. I saw broken microscopes that this class needed but couldn't use. I saw storerooms for the Biology and Chemistry departments that had more empty shelves than full. I went to what used to be the Dental School and university-run Dental Clinic, where the destruction of equipment was so complete, that these programs cannot even survive with the other programs at the U. I was handed a list of 152 teachers, students, administrators, and staff who have been killed, captured, or have disappeared since the invasion of 1980, a list which has the former rector of the university as its first entry, "Ing. Felix Antonio Ulloa - Asesinado" (assassinated).

As I walked through the campuses of UES, I saw students and teachers who strive to understand the problems of their country, and who want to solve these problems. And now as I walk across the campus of WWU, I can only see this commitment to study and solve a nations' problems as good, as beneficial, as imperative for a healthy society. I see no reason, no excuse, no logical answer to the question "Why? Why invade and occupy a university?" I can only see that this invasion and occupation of a university by the armed forces of its own country should never happen, not at UES, not at WWU, not anywhere.

But it may happen again at UES. In February, 1985 in response to the voiced desire of students that the Salvadoran government increase its budget for UES (as now only some teacher's salaries are being paid, nothing else), the commander of the Salvadoran Air Force, General Juan Rafael Bustillo, said that "for the moment that was not the most important" (place to put money) and he affirmed that if they keep provoking, the Armed Forces will again take the university.

International pressure reopened UES in 1984. International pressure can keep it open. Write letters of support for UES, either letters from an organization you belong to, or personal letters, and send copies to:

Ambassador Thomas Pickering  
U.S. Embassy  
San Salvador, El Salvador

President Duarte  
Casa Presidencial  
San Salvador, El Salvador

Miguel Angel Pavada, rector  
University of El Salvador  
San Salvador, El Salvador





Bill Dissler

**T**here are many ways of looking at war. One way is through war movies, we learn that wars are fought by soldiers. Soldiers meet nurses, tell jokes, share cigarettes, complain about the new lieutenant, make speeches while dying, and usually act bravely during combat. Since the first war was fought, but especially since the beginning of World War II, this is not an accurate reflection of war.

The major effect of modern war is the suffering of civilians and the destruction of the landscape. World War II saw the destruction of major cities by aerial bombing. This method of strategic bombing continued during the Korean War. During the Vietnam War, according to professors Arthur Westing and E. W. Pfeiffer of the University of Montana, only 5 to 8% of the bombing by U.S. forces was for troop support in battle. The rest was classified as "harassment and interdiction" or strategic.

Because this bombing was not directed at any specific target, it fell most heavily on the civilian population and the land itself.

Westing and Pfeiffer made three trips to Indochina during the U.S. participation in the war. Being ecologists, one of their main concerns was the effects of Agent Orange and other herbicides used by the U.S. military. While travelling through Indochina, they noticed the large number of craters left by bombs and artillery shells. From 1965 to 1971, "Indochina, a region slightly larger than Texas, was bombarded by a tonnage of munitions amounting to approximately twice the total used by the U.S. in all of World War II." Westing and Pfeiffer estimated that this produced 26 million craters, 21 million of which are in South Vietnam. Because there has not been a war fought on U.S. soil since the Civil War, it is almost impossible to have a feeling for the human suffering and ecological damage that was caused by this indiscriminate bombing.

In addition to conventional bombing and artillery, the U.S. military used napalm and phosphorous bombs, cluster bombs, herbicides, land-clearing "Rome plows," gas-vapor bombs, machinegun equipped cargo planes, and "Daisy-cutters," to name just a few of the innovations introduced for this war against the land.

Napalm is jellied gas which sticks to and burns everything it touches. Phosphorous is a chemical that ignites on contact with air. It burns with an intense heat and will burn until it consumes itself. If fragments hit a person or animal, they burn deep holes in the flesh. The fumes are toxic and traces entering the bloodstream can cause blood poisoning.

Cluster bombs are large canisters containing hundreds of "bomblets" weighting one to two pounds. When the canister breaks open in mid-air, the bomblets are

spread over a wide area. They are specifically designed as anti-personnel bombs, sending out large amounts of shrapnel when they explode. Because of their light weight, some of the bomblets remain suspended in trees or bushes. They can later fall on anyone unlucky enough to shake them loose.

Herbicides, including Agents Orange, Blue, and White, were used to defoliate forests and to purposefully destroy food crops of the local populations. "Rome plows" were bulldozers specially designed to remove brush and topsoil. By 1971, whole companies of these plows had cleared a total of 750,000 acres.

Gas-vapor bombs were developed during the Vietnam War but were used only once. A large bomb casing sprayed vaporized gas over a large area before it hit the ground, followed by a spark that ignited it.

Cargo planes with Gatling guns, known as "Spooky" or "Puff," could fire up to 18,000 rounds per minute. Witnesses said that after "Puff" was done, the area they had fired into resembled a plowed field.

"Daisy-cutters" were 15,000 pound bombs that were stabilized by parachute and exploded just above the ground. Their special job was to knock down trees to clear helicopter landings in dense jungle. In the last week of the Vietnam War the U.S. supplied several "Daisy-cutters" to the Saigon air force. These bombs were used on the opposing army with devastating effect.

The long-term ecological effects of the Vietnam War are not well known because relations between the U.S. and Vietnam are virtually non-existent. Private scientific and veteran's groups have made trips to Vietnam. Vietnamese scientists have published reports on the effects of herbicides on the Vietnamese people. But the U.S. media focuses on Vietnam's invasion of Kkampuchea and not on the living conditions of the Vietnamese. It takes enormous human energy to rebuild a country that was subjected to the explosive energy of 450 Hiroshima nuclear bombs.

Some of the effects of the war are easy to count but impossible to feel. During the 35

years of war in Indochina, 1.9 million Vietnamese were killed, 4.5 million wounded, and 9 million became refugees. Over 58,000 Americans died and 300,000 were wounded. These numbers can't begin to help us understand the shock and sorrow of Vietnamese parents finding their villages destroyed and their children dead or of American parents learning that their daughter or son has died in the war.

Every bomb that fell in Vietnam destroyed something. If it didn't kill people, it killed animals or tress or just left a hole in the ground. Trees that weren't destroyed were riddled with metal fragments and often became infected with bacterial or fungal rot. Those that were cut down for lumber caused problems at sawmills when the blades hit the imbedded metal.

Bomb craters have lost their fertile topsoil and the earth that remains is compacted subsoil. Shell craters from the 1917 Battle of Verdun in France are still devoid of vegetation. The human energy required to fill these craters and restore their fertility in a non-mechanized society is enormous. Unexploded bombs continue to mine the country. Metal fragments in the soil cut hooves of water buffalo and the feet of peasants. Craters which have penetrated the water table create year-round breeding spots for mosquitos carrying malaria and dengue fever.

Napalm, phosphorous, and illumination flares started fires in agricultural fields and forests. Defoliation destroyed plants and deprived animals of habitat. All of the warfare activities contributed to soil erosion.

The human wounds of war have not healed yet either. The burns caused by napalm and phosphorous require special care and treatment unavailable to most Vietnamese. The psychological trauma is still evident in the problems Vietnam veterans are having in a society that will not face the truth. People still feel the effects of their physical wounds. The U.S. government refuses to take any responsibility for the effects of Agent Orange even though it contains dioxin, proven to be the most toxic manufactured chemical yet discovered.



**I**t is necessary to understand the human and environmental effects of the war in Vietnam in order to get a feeling for the destruction taking place in El Salvador. First, the effects of the war in El Salvador are not yet as apparent; there hasn't been time for ecological studies to be published. Also, the war is not yet perceived as an American war, even though the U.S. Congress has provided over \$1 billion to support the Salvadoran government.

According to a recent study by Congress: 15% of U.S. aid has gone to reform and development, 30% has gone to direct military aid, and 55% has gone to maintenance of the Salvadoran government. Included in this 55% are Economic Support Funds to help the Salvadoran government pay its debts, feed refugees, and rebuild bridges and power lines destroyed by the rebel forces. Because it is not perceived as a U.S. war, the U.S. media doesn't seem to be making a strenuous effort to get out in the countryside to see what's happening.

Is El Salvador another Vietnam? Are U.S. military advisors to the Salvadoran army using the same strategy that was used in Vietnam? A U.S. officer in Vietnam told Westing and Pfeiffer that the strategy was "forced urbanization;" in other words, the purpose of the random bombardment in the countryside was to drive the peasants into the towns where they could be controlled. In the Congressional study mentioned above, they note that the Red Cross and AmericansWatch (a human rights monitoring group) registered 105,000 new internal refugees between Nov., 1983 and July, 1984. AmericansWatch, after interviewing refugees from the fighting, says:

... that the armed forces of El Salvador, ground and air, are engaged in indiscriminate attacks upon the civilian population in conflict zones ... in El Salvador. It appears that the purpose of these attacks is to force civilians to flee these zones, thereby depriving the guerrillas of a civilian population from which they can obtain food and other necessities.

AmericasWatch says further, "The cost of pursuing this policy, in terms of human suffering, is beyond measurement.

As the death squad killings have declined, the bombing and shelling has increased. The U.S. has supplied helicopters, spotter planes with phosphorous rockets, A-37 "Dragonfly" jet bombers, and C-47 cargo planes with .50 caliber machine guns. In addition, mortars and artillery, 250, 500, and 750 pound bombs, and bombs with fuse extenders have been supplied. All of these technical innovations for warfare will not change the pattern of injustice in El Salvador.

The daily routine of people living in the disputed zones and the zones of rebel control have been described by refugees. One told Chris Hedges of *The Christian Science Monitor* (4-27-84):

"We have dug holes in the ground outside our villages to hide when the planes come," says a person displaced from the town of Guadalupe, "and we keep the children near the holes or in them all day. At first the Air Force dropped bombs that knocked down trees and houses, killed people, and made a three meter crater ... Now they use the worst bomb of all — the flaming liquid."

Mr. Hedges quotes another refugee in the same article:

"These bombs," says one man, "not only burn down our villages and our homes, but our plots of land. We are left, after the attack, with nothing."

Refugees have testified that the smoke of a cooking fire or clothes hung to dry will bring a bombing attack upon them. It is also very difficult to work in the fields and this has led people to cultivate several small, scattered plots, if possible.

U.S. surveillance planes make daily flights over El Salvador from Honduras and Panama. The sound of a plane nearby now terrorizes people. The threat of being bombed makes a normal life impossible.

The use of napalm and white phosphorous on civilians has been documented. Mr. Hedges article was based on interviews with Salvadoran soldiers, refugees, and a European doctor who all confirmed that incendiary weapons were being used against civilians. But:

Salvadoran officials, however, deny the existence of incendiary bombs in the Air Force's arsenal. And U.S. officials say no such bombs have been supplied to the Salvadorans.

However, the *New York Times* (9-30-84) reported: "The Salvadoran military pos-

sesses stocks and napalm incendiary weapons, the U.S. ambassador to El Salvador said today. ... Regarding use of the weapons by Salvadoran government forces, Mr. Pickering (the ambassador) said, "I know of no verifiable reports."

Dr. John Constable, a Harvard University burn specialist who visited El Salvador, examined four refugees who had been burned. He concluded that their wounds were "classically consistent" with exposure to napalm.

On Oct. 9, 1984 the *New York Times* reported that: "The commander of El Salvador's air force told visiting members of the U.S. Congress last year that napalm incendiary bombs had been used against guerilla forces, a member of the delegation said today."

Napalming civilians will not solve El Salvador's environmental and economic problems.

El Salvador and Vietnam have many environmental similarities. Both have a wet and dry season, coastal plains, and mountainous interiors. Both are tropical and the people are subject to some of the same diseases, malaria for one. Both are agrarian societies. Both have been subjected to high technology war involving the U.S. Both are suffering from the effects of these wars.

Even before the war, El Salvador's environment had been under severe strain. Because of the nature of its society, many rural people had been forced into extremely marginal and hilly land. El Salvador is about the size of Massachusetts and is slightly less densely populated. But an agrarian country faces special problems that an industrialized state does not. While the people of Massachusetts are dependent to a large extent on manufacturing jobs, the lives of the Salvadoran people are based on access to and wide use of the land. A high-technology war aimed at removing the population and destroying resources will only force the environmental situation to a crisis point.

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# Appropriate Action in Nicaragua

David Funke Kathy Creahan

(In 1984, David Funke and Kathy Creahan spent three months in Nicaragua. Working for IRENA, the Nicaraguan Department of Natural Resources, they started the tree nursery mentioned in this article.)

**J**ust north of Lake Managua, in an area of fertile volcanic soil, the village of Cuarto Palos serves as the center of the Jose Benito Escobar agricultural cooperative. Comprised of land abandoned by a high official in the Somoza government, the cooperative is developing rice production as part of Nicaragua's drive to achieve food self-sufficiency.

Cuarto Palos sparked the interest of a group of architectural and engineering students from the University of Lund, Sweden. With financing from the Swedish government, they arranged with the Nicaraguans to make the village a site for development and implementation of ideas for appropriate community design and housing construction; techniques suitable for the "third world." Cuarto Palos offered challenges and opportunities for such a project. A sprawling village of about 400 people, its center is an old hacienda and rice hulling plant. Heat and dust dominate nine months of the year; rain and mud make the roads impassable the other three. Also, the area is very active seismically, being only about twenty-five miles from the epicenter of the earthquake that devastated Managua in 1972. The houses are thatch huts and wooden shacks. Those dwellings nearest the village center have running water and electricity from a generator for a few hours a day. Poorly designed latrines have contributed to well

contamination. Abundant, large hardwood trees provide lumber for the village sawmill.

After surveying the living habits of the people and appraising the available building materials, the Swedes designed a basic plan for homes that would be appropriate for the area. When planning such designs, certain criteria were kept in mind: expense, use of local materials, ease of construction, resistance to earthquake, and convenience to the people.

The design the Swedes decided on is a light wooden house set on a foundation of lava rock, roofed with tiles. Each house has a shower, kitchen, latrine, and running water piped from a central well. A system of open ditches carries grey water and surface runoff from the houses. The floor plan is modular so that house size can be adjusted to fit any family size.

The village plan includes the planting of 20,000 trees, all to be started from seed. The trees are to serve both aesthetic and practical purposes: a wind break to protect the houses from the debris of the rice-processing, shade for the streets, firewood and fruit production.

Our involvement was limited to initiation of the seedling nursery. Since the house construction had not started when we arrived in Cuarto Palos, the nursery phase was the first visible progress to come out of the several months of planning by the Swedes. The villagers were enthusiastic, but at the same time confused about who was to do the work. The intent of the entire project was for the villagers to build their own houses. Since the trees were not to be owned by individuals, it was harder to pin down the responsibility for getting them planted.

Our first evening we witnessed commun-

ity decision-making at work. By the end of the meeting most of the women had agreed to spend one afternoon each week helping us put soil into the plastic bags—our planting pots. In addition, a fence-building team was formed.

We started the next day and learned that many of the tools we normally depended on, if not available, were not necessary. A machete used with skill was as fast as a chain saw in cutting branches. When we needed a tool to clean the site of grass and weeds, the village carpenter built us a rake. He also built a large sifter for the soil. Loads of soil were brought to us from near the river, usually by the construction workers on their lunch break. We then sifted it and put it in plastic bags which were stacked into beds to hold each other up. The work squads included as many kids as adults and quite often our efforts were directed at controlling the wheelbarrow races and dirt pile jumping as well as the planting.

Most of the seeds were provided by IRENE. They included fast growing trees like eucalyptus and large spreading species like guanacaste. The preferred fruit tree was the maranon, which we discovered was cashew. There was a lot of excitement in Cuarto Palos the day we went to the maranon orchard a few miles away and brought back buckets of the pungent fruit, each piece with its one cashew seed, the only part we wanted.

Because of our limited ability to speak Spanish, we weren't always aware of schedules and arrangements. One morning when we arrived to start work, to our surprise, one of the village seniors was watering the newly sown bags. He showed up regularly in the mornings and evenings to water, while another kept the area swept clean.

Our time spent in Cuarto Palos was limited. By the time we left, 8,000 seedling had been sown and the process was well under way. Fortunately our friend, Lucy, who accompanied us to Cuarto Palos, was able to stay to coordinate the nursery. She has kept us informed about the progress at Cuarto Palos. The seedlings were planted in their permanent spots a few months ago, with good survival. The building construction is going well. The first structure to be completed was the schoolhouse (the first ever in the village.) Enthusiasm builds as houses are completed.

While an earnest critic could find areas of concern in the way the Cuarto Palos project was conceived and is being carried out, its goals of devising ways to better the health and comfort of people in poor countries without increasing their dependence on modern gadgetry and imported goods contrasts favorably with many third-world development projects. If you would like more information on the project, write:

Creahan-Funke  
3835 Idaho St.  
Bellingham, WA 98225

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## Sanctuary *Continued from 2*

told Raphael that the faster he left the country, the better his chances for survival. Raphael's account would lead one to believe that he is a refugee as defined by the United Nations, and thus should be granted asylum. He is presently awaiting deportation hearings.

Only about 2% of the Central Americans applying for even temporary asylum are given permission to remain in the United States; virtually all persons applying for asylum from any communist country are granted asylum. Central Americans awaiting deportation trials are often kept in "detention centers," or prisons. Rob Stultz, an active local supporter of Sanctuary, states that 30% of those people that are deported back to Central America are killed.

If the United States government was to admit that most immigrants from Central America are political refugees, it would have to admit that these people had a reason to flee their country, and thus draw attention and inquiry into U.S. policies in Central America. Therefore, the U.S. Department of State declares that "... the lack of eco-

nomic opportunities either at home or within the region is probably the major cause of the Salvadoran immigration to the United States." By defining the refugees as such, the United States makes them "illegal aliens" and thus subject to arrest and deportation. Those people who help and support them are committing felonies and are subject to prosecution. In January of this year, sixteen leaders of the Movement and over 60 refugees were arrested in the United States. Bail was generally set at \$2,000; refugees face deportation and United States citizens, if found guilty could serve up to 5 years in prison.

The Sanctuary Movement, partly as a result of this crackdown, recently changed it's emphasis from a quiet, politically passive role to a publicly active role of openly defying the U.S. government. The January issue of *Basta!*, a newsletter distributed by the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, clearly outlines these changes by stating that at this time the Sanctuary Movement should emphasize the goal of stopping U.S. intervention in Central America. At the April 21st meeting, Ganjo Marinello, a representative of a Quaker group

offering sanctuary, spoke of three reasons to become a public sanctuary: 1) to openly assist those not going through the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service) deportation process, thus openly defying the government, 2) to openly defy the government in it's interpretation of the situation and 3) to provide the refugees already in this country with an opportunity to speak out with a relative sense of security. Marinello went on to say that the more public the sanctuary movement becomes, the safer the refugees are from INS arrests.

The legal and moral issues discussed above are all part of what a church or other organization must consider when discussing Sanctuary. Less esoteric issues include money, housing, availability of Spanish speaking individuals within the group, and the availability of a support system for the refugees and for members of the organization.

As the Sanctuary Movement continues to grow, increasing numbers of individuals and groups will have to face these important issues. Increasing numbers of people will also have to decide for themselves their moral obligation. Perhaps the bottom line was best expressed by Raphael. When asked if he felt there was hope for his country he replied, "Yes, if the United States government were to stop sending arms to El Salvador."

## A Land in the Hands of a Few

Anne Atkeson

"... the rich land owners came, and since no one knew Spanish, they frightened us. They made believe they were engineers and started to measure the fields. And they told the campesinos to either leave, or stay as wage earners, because the land was theirs. Then their gunmen threatened to chase us out. They came into our homes, threw all our things out, and broke everything, because all we had was clay pots ... my father was kidnapped by the landowner's gunmen, who tortured him and left him in the mountains, thinking he was dead."

Rogoberta Menchu, age 26  
Quiche region, Guatemala  
From "Uno Mas Uno" (Mexico City newspaper), May 29, 1982. Taped by Elizabeth Burgos and translated by Javier Bajana and Jonathan Fried.

Guatemala is a Central American country about the size of Tennessee where less than three percent of the landowners control 66 percent of the agricultural area. According to the World Bank, "the situation is even worse than these figures indicate" (Guatemala: Country Economic Memorandum, 1980). The World Bank study concluded that the plots held by the campesinos were too small to permit modern cultivation techniques and consisted of some of the poorest land in Guatemala. The *minifundios* (subsistence plots) are found mainly in the central and western highlands. This area includes the Altiplano "... where the terrain is so broken that much of the land currently under cultivation should be returned to

permanent cover," according to the World Bank study.

An Agency for International Development (AID) report of the Altiplano states that by 1980 "... nine out of ten people were living on plots of land too small to provide income sufficient to meet their basic needs." (Report of the AID Field Mission in Guatemala, 1980). In addition, each generation of minifundistas divides a finite amount of land amongst their children causing the plots to decrease in size. "At the same time, many of these minifundios are being taken over by large landowners, *latifundistas* (agroexport farms) through economic pressure, legal action, and brute force," says Jonathan Fried in *Guatemala in Rebellion: Unfinished History*. As a result, minifundio farmers are forced to cultivate land that is steep, rocky, and poorly drained, causing soil destruction and deforestation.

The rural repression of 1980-1982 has also contributed to the landlessness of the campesinos. The Guatemalan Army and National Police, under President General Lucas Garcis, carried out rural massacres to crush a growing popular movement. The Catholic bishops reported in 1982 that more than one million (the population of Guatemala is approximately 7.2 million) had fled their land and villages. The bishops also said there had been large scale abandonment of previously cultivated fields and the campesinos were fearful of planting or harvesting in areas destroyed by repeated massacres.

Landlessness and lack of ability to sustain themselves year round on poor lands has created the necessity for many campesinos to migrate annually to the Pacific coast latifundios to work as wage laborers. In 1980,

according to an AID study, 600,000 campesinos per year migrated to the cotton and sugar plantations for wages of \$.50 - 1.00 per day. The economic necessity of the subsistence farmers to supplement their income with wages and the abundance of available labor allows the latifundistas to choose the wage they will pay. In 1978 Francis Moore Lappe, author of *Diet for a Small Planet* and *Food First*, met two highland campesinos who were teaching other poor campesinos to make 'contour ditches' to reduce erosion on the steep slopes. The rich landowners in the valley had forced the campesinos to occupy the unstable ground according to Lappe. Later Lappe learned that one of the campesinos had been killed and the other forced into hiding. Their "crime" was teaching their neighbors better farming techniques. Lappe concluded that the erosion control teachings might have made the poor less dependent on the low-paying jobs of the plantations; a threat to the wealthy landowners of the countryside.



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## Reviews

### NICARAGUA: The Land of Sandino

By Thomas W. Walker  
137 p.p. Boulder Colorado:  
Westview Press. \$11.50  
Book Review by Susan Anderson

With all the controversy concerning United States' involvement in Central America, it is important to be educated on the issues before making final judgements. This means looking at both sides of the issues and separating truth from propaganda. Although the Reagan Administration's position tends to dominate television, newspapers, and popular magazines; there are many books and articles available that offer alternative positions on Central America.

One such source of information is a book called *NICARAGUA: The Land of Sandino*. The author, Thomas W. Walker, has been studying and writing about this country since the mid-1960's and has an understanding of Nicaragua from the Spanish conquest in 1508 to current times. His knowledge ranges from the history to the politics, economics, and culture of the area.

The first two sections of the book are devoted to giving the reader a historical background. He explores the four and a half centuries of foreign rule from Spain to the U.S. backed Somoza regime. He points out and discusses the political interests concerning the San Juan River and Lake Managua as a possible alternative to the Panama Canal.

Thomas Walker gives a concise account of the Somoza regime and its eventual overthrow by the Sandinist Front of National Liberation (FSLN). By understanding the corruption and repressive forces of the Somoza government, one begins to empathize with the people of Nicaragua who supported and helped with the revolution.

Next, Walker gives a general economic history of this country. He describes how a country rich in natural resources with the ability to support its own people became primarily dependent on the exportation of a single cash crop—coffee. Because of this dependency, the majority of the Nicaraguan people lost control over their land and their lives.

Although the beginnings of Thomas Walker's account of the culture of Nicaragua sounds like a travel brochure, one later finds that he deals with contemporary issues such as racism, sexism, and conflicts between classes. So not only does he give a description of the clothes, customs, language and food of the people of Nicaragua, he also discusses problems that are both pre- and post-revolution. This ranges from the class differences during the Somoza regime to the racial problems between the Sandinista government and the Mesquito Indians.

Also included in this section are descriptions of the post-revolution social reforms. These programs are still being implemented to improve the living conditions of the majority of the Nicaraguan people. Immediately after the revolution, labor intensive public works projects were implemented throughout the urban and rural areas. The Literacy Crusade of 1980 helped to lower the illiteracy rate from over 50% of the population to less than 13%. A wide scale health program was made available to everyone.

If one wishes to know more about the Sandinist government and its external opposition, it can be found in the concluding section of Thomas Walker's book. Since many references to Nicaragua are either pre- or post-revolution, this book is refreshing in that it presents an overall view of this country and its people before and after revolution. This overall view is fundamental in understanding the plight not only of Nicaragua, but of other Central American countries.

Although this book is rather simplistic at times, it is a good starting point for increasing one's knowledge about Nicaragua. It is well documented with many footnotes, references and photographs. One may wish to wait before purchasing this book since a new expanded edition is due for release in July which is sure to include the effects of the Reagan Administration's policies toward this country.

**N**icaragua: *Sing the Mountains, Weep the Cage* is a one hour documentary film produced in 1984 by the Archdiocese of Seattle on the war-weary country of Nicaragua.

The tensions of living in a land of contradictions are related through the perspective of the campesinos (peasants), heads of state, counter-revolution leaders, Honduran government officials, top Sandinista leaders, and workers of refugee camps.

An ecumenical group of ten religious leaders from the United States visited Nicaragua in the spring of 1984 to hear the stories from these people—their history, hopes, and fight. Although it attempts to present both sides of the struggle, the history of Nicaragua lead a Mexican worker to state that, "Many people are immune to the danger from the Soviet Union because the only danger they have ever known is from the United States." The film challenges and provokes questions regarding the U.S. government's support of the contras, the U.S. effort to divide the world into two big blocks, the many U.S. invasions in Nicaragua.

The issues are complex. Yet a primary challenge according to many interviewed is the internal reality—the daily struggle for existence, the need for just social structures, and the right to self-determination in their relationship with other countries.

The film is available for campus/community use. Call Shirley Osterhaus: 733-3400, for reservations.

