alliance for global justice

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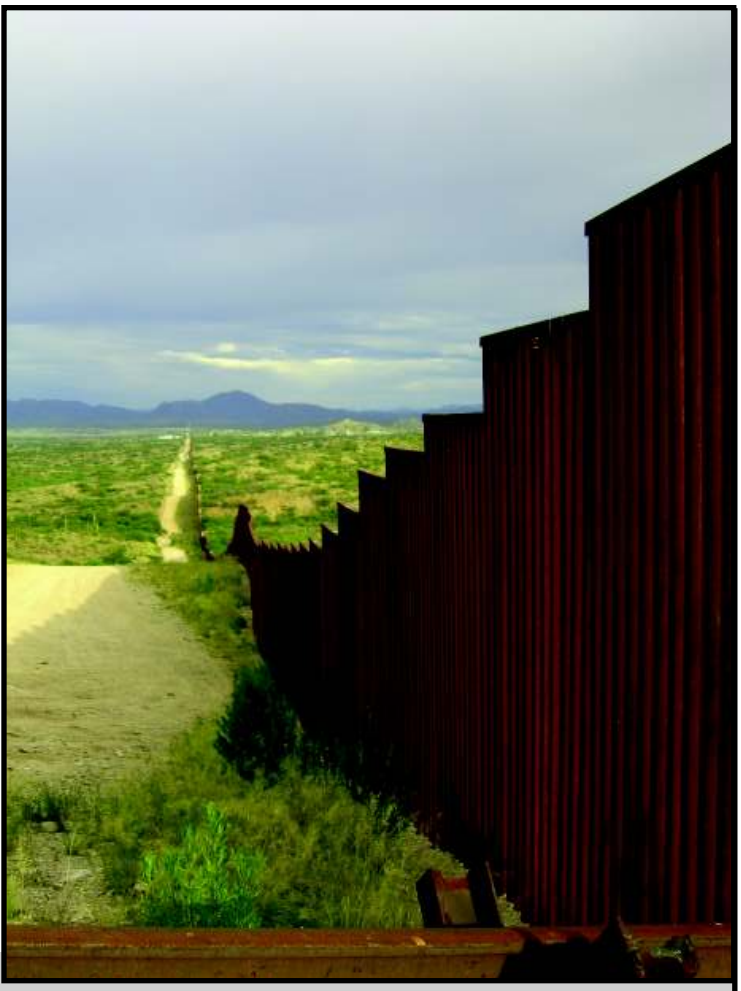
global justice monitor

# Along the Border

*By Jamie Way (Way is the Media and Communications Coordinator for AFGJ)*

*During our board retreat last week in Tucson, Arizona, we attended a border tour guided by the Tucson-based group, Coalicion de Derechos Humanos.*



The border fence in Arizona comes to an abrupt end directly to the right of this photo. (Photo: Jamie Way)

A Latino man sat in a shelter with bloodied feet, torn apart and shredded from what was likely well over a 50 mile grueling trek in the Sonoran desert. He wore slacks and a nice button-up shirt, now dirtied from his journey, along with a pair of dress shoes. Kat Rodriguez of Derechos Humanos tried to joke with the man. "Did you think you were going to a dance?" she asked him. He looked at her sadly, "They told me we would only be walking for a few hours." As an immigrant he had worn his best, hoping to look nice for his first day in his new country.

Sadly, that is far from the most difficult interaction Kat has had through her human rights work along the Arizona border. She also recounted the time she had to call the family of a 14 year-old girl to report that her remains had been found. **Story Continued on Page 6 "Border"**

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# Honduras Delegation Accompanies Resistance

*By Chuck Kaufman (Kaufman is a National Co-Coordinator for AFGJ)*

Fifty men, women and children, armed only with machetes and sticks, stared down 300 Honduran soldiers and a judge who came to their village with the intent to destroy their community radio station. After a three hour stand-off on the shores of the Gulf of Fonseca, the soldiers went away.

This, and stories like it, were heard over and over again by our delegation to Honduras from Sept. 14-22, 2010. The delegation was co-sponsored by Marin Task Force on the Americas and the Alliance for Global Justice. It was led by Andres Conteris of Democracy Now in Español who spent four months in the Brazilian embassy with deposed President Manuel Zelaya.

Since the US-backed coup of June 28, 2009, the social movements in Honduras have come together and matured as a movement for the first time and with a unity seldom witnessed anywhere in the world. The Popular Front for National Resistance (FRNP) is made up of groups ranging from "Liberals in Resistance" who are members of Zelaya's center-right political party who opposed the coup, labor unions, teachers, LGBT activists, women's groups, youth, artists and peasant organizations.

Our delegation was organized to provide accompaniment on September 15th, Central American Independence Day, when the FRNP held marches in every major city that far overshadowed the official celebrations of the defacto government of President Porfirio Lobo. On that day, the Resistance released the names of over 1.3 million Hondurans who signed petitions calling for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution to "refound the nation." The goal of the FRNP was to gather more signatures than the one million votes that the coup government claimed Lobo received in what the resistance calls the "selection" of November 2009. We could only dream of collecting 1.3 million signatures in our many-times-larger country, which signifies the unity and determination of the Resistance and the rejection of the coup by the majority of Hondurans.

In Tela, on the Caribbean Coast, one leader told us, "It used to be that when the police said 'go there' we went. Not anymore." Police tried to seize the stage and musical instruments during Tela's September 15th Resistance march, but the participants surrounded the stage and refused to allow the police to close them down.

Our delegation participated in the gigantic Resistance march in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. I have been in every major US anti-war march since 2001 and none were bigger. Student marching bands, t-shirted union blocs, dancers, sound trucks, graffiti artists and uncountable numbers of citizens stretched for nearly all of the two mile march route in the hot sun. Despite the presence of heavily armed military near the beginning and ends of the march, there was almost no police or military presence along the march route and the marchers were festive and boisterous. The number of young people in the march was particularly notable.

> "It used to be that when the police said 'go there' we went. Not anymore."

But, at the same time that the Tegucigalpa march was making its way to a peaceful conclusion, the march in Honduras' second largest city, San Pedro Sula, was attacked by police just as it was concluding in a space where a concert featuring Honduras' most popular band was to perform. They reportedly fired 1,000 tear gas canisters into the crowd and into the building housing Radio Uno, which supports the Resistance. One street vendor was killed outright and two others, including a nine year-old boy, died the next day. Dozens were injured including the members of the band who were beaten and their instruments and equipment were destroyed.

We met with some of the victims several days later who still bore gruesome injuries including one man whose teeth were smashed by a rifle butt. The Resistance is defiantly planning another march in...

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# Human Rights & US Militarism

*By Chuck Kaufman and Midge Quandt (Kaufman is a National Co-Coordinator for AFGJ and Quandt is on the board of AFGJ)*

Cartoon by Cagle Cartoons, originally printed by the Ottawa Citizen

Since the end of the Cold War, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention — which asserts that severe human rights violations justify the abrogation of national sovereignty — has become a hallmark of liberal and left opinion on international affairs. A Carnegie Endowment Report of 1992 echoed this view when it stated that the destruction of populations within states called for international intervention. The massacre of Bosnian Muslims by Serbs; genocide in Rwanda; the famines and wars elsewhere in Africa — all these understandably added fuel to the argument. Denial of personal and political freedoms was also deemed grounds for intervention in the affairs of other countries.

In this scenario, the enemies of human rights are rogue states and left-leaning, democratically elected "autocracies" in the Third World. These are "the new Hitlers." In an effective effort to give legitimacy to the Balkan War, Bill Clinton drew a parallel between Nazi genocide and Serbian atrocities. "What if someone had listened to Winston Churchill and stood up to Adolf Hitler sooner? How many lives might have been saved?" he said at the start of the 1999 bombing campaign.

The interventionist mind-set also has a political dimension, especially with respect to Latin America. Since 2003, US-funded NGOs have helped local forces overthrow the government in Haiti, and most recently, Honduras. In addition, they supported a failed coup against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela in 2002. Here the line between the armed and civil society intervention is blurred.

The specter of fascism is often invoked to give moral legitimacy to intervention, armed or otherwise. This ploy is also meant to disarm critics of US behavior. The term "totalitarian" has been laughably used to describe ousted President Zelaya of Honduras, perhaps because of his unforgivable ties to the supposedly preeminent despot of Latin America, Hugo Chavez. Chavez, too, has been likened to Hitler by the US media and the Venezuelan opposition. (Another variant on this theme is the analogy made between Muslim fundamentalism and Nazi Germany that has given birth to the concept of "Islamofascism.") Though these analogies might seem far-fetched, they do the job they are meant to do: demonizing the supposed enemies of freedom, adding force to liberal-left guilt.

An alternative to the juxtaposition of freedom/fascism is that of democracy/communism and its relatives. "Drawing on the lesson of the disastrous history of leftist apologetics over crimes of Stalinism and Maoism," the Anglo-American Euston Manifesto of 2006 concluded that "leftists who make common cause with anti-democratic forces should be criticized in clear and forthright terms," and thrown into the outer darkness with all the other opponents of the only kind of democracy considered acceptable on the left today: representative democracy. This kind of rhetorical device owes its success in large part to the demise of "actually existing socialism" in the Soviet Union. Not only is state socialism beyond the pale, but anything that smacks of top-down politics is viewed with suspicion if not repugnance.

Which brings us to the human rights argument and its uses. Beginning with Jimmy Carter, for whom a commitment to human rights — "the soul of American foreign policy" — was a way to rehabilitate our reputation after Vietnam, the doctrine of human rights has become part of the reigning orthodoxy of the liberal establishment.

**Story Continued on Page 9 "Rights"**

**PHOTO HIGHLIGHT:** On Sept. 24-27th, AFGJ held its annual board retreat. It was held in Tucson, Arizona, where the new program office, the Sandino Center, was inaugurated. While AFGJ headquarters is still in Washington, D.C., there are now program offices in Denver, San Diego and Tucson, enabling operation on a truly national basis.

# Statement on FBI Raids

*The following is AFGJ's statement on the FBI raids and grand jury investigation of Colombia and Palestine solidarity activists.*

The Alliance for Global Justice condemns and urges all people of good will to protest the September 24, 2010, FBI raids on Colombia and Palestine solidarity activists' homes in Minneapolis and Chicago. The raids and grand jury investigation are nothing less than an effort to criminalize solidarity efforts to promote peaceful and just solutions to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the half century civil war in Colombia.

The Alliance for Global Justice is particularly concerned about unconfirmed reports that our National Co-Coordinator James Jordan is among 22 people named in the search warrant for the Minneapolis anti-war office, meaning that his emails with them will be read. Jordan has done groundbreaking work in exposing the US Bureau of Prisons' role in the construction and oversight of prisons in Colombia where conditions constitute nearly unimaginable human rights violations such as lack of sanitary facilities and access to potable water as little as ten minutes a day. Jordan has also been an international leader in the effort to expose the unjust incarceration and prosecution of Colombian labor leader Liliany Obando who was jailed on the eve of her release of a report documenting military and paramilitary assassinations and human rights violations against Colombia's largest farmer/farmworker union, FENSUAGRO, which has had more members killed than any union in the world.

The grand jury "witch hunt" is reportedly looking for evidence that activists have violated the ban of "material support" for groups designated as "terrorist" by the United States government. The definition of material support was recently broadened recklessly by the US Supreme Court. The Alliance for Global Justice sees the current persecution of Colombia and Palestine solidarity activists as the first step to criminalize actions in solidarity with governments and social movements which oppose US hegemony, economic policy and militarism. We think this is an extremely dangerous attack on civil liberties by the Obama Administration and cannot be allowed to stand.

The Alliance for Global Justice does not, and has never, provided material support, even under the new definition promulgated by the Supreme Court, to any organization designated as a "terrorist organization" by the US government. We do not, in fact, provide any support.

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# Neostructuralism: A Makeover for Neoliberalism in Latin America

*By Midge Quandt (Quandt is on the board of AFGJ.)*

There is a dynamic at work today in Latin America that echoes Western European developments after the devastation of World War II and the economic disasters of the inter-war period. The Center-Left governments of postwar Western Europe were committed to reforms that would stabilize the capitalist system and bring a higher standard of living to the general population. One goal was to defuse the appeal of political extremism: a resurrection of Fascism or the spread of Communist totalitarianism. In the US, extremist threats to the system came on the heels of the Great Depression, including destabilizing, large-scale strikes and Huey Long's share-the-wealth movement. FDR responded with the mollifying Second New Deal.

Both in Europe and the US, what defined the Center-Left politics of social democracy was a program that aimed to humanize (and save) capitalism through construction of a welfare state. The welfare state would ward off social unrest and political extremism; it would tame anti-capitalist movements. In Latin America today, the story is somewhat similar. The popular revolt against the neoliberal disaster of the 1980s and 1990s have induced the Center-Left forces there to champion a more interventionist state devoted to social-democratic programs such as poverty reduction. That way, capitalism stays intact and the threats to it — grassroots rebellions and so-called authoritarian regimes like that of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (sometimes likened to Hitler) — are neutralized. Moderate reform is the answer to serious challenges to the status quo.

Such a reformist stance is sometimes described as neostructuralism. This response to neoliberalism and the consequent upheavals (Bill Clinton recently said "the world was too unequal to be stable") is spearheaded by Jorge Castañeda, Mexico's foreign minister from 2000 to 2003 and Roberto Mangabeira Unger, formerly Brazil's Minister of Strategic Affairs in Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's Government. These social democratic intellectuals and critics of the far left have created the academic organization, the Latin American Alternative Group. It promotes a neostructuralism that opposes itself to the more brutal incarnation of neoliberalism, the Washington Consensus, with its stripped-down state, privatization and cuts in the public sector. Casteñeda and Unger favor an expanded social service sector. The aim is to diminish poverty and increase the productivity of the marginalized.

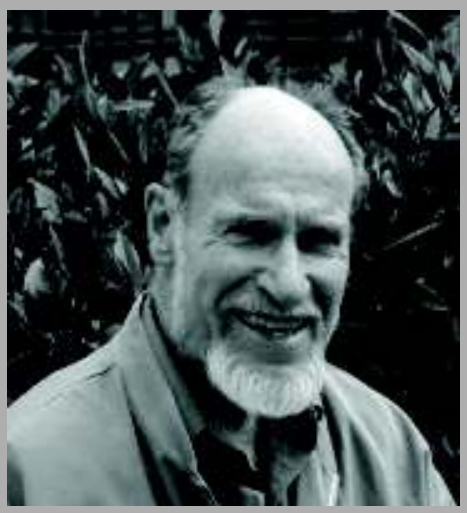
Governing in the manner of a reformed neoliberalism, Lula recently described himself as a social democrat. He added that anyone who "remained loyal to left-wing ideas must have some sort of (mental) problem." His government has enacted some reasonably successful anti-poverty measures, such as Bolsa Familia. It has not, however, done anything about agrarian reform in a country with a high concentration of land ownership and a militant landless workers' movement. And Unger was responsible for the resource-hungry multinational incursions into the Amazon region. (According to Obama biographer, David Remick, Unger who taught Obama at Harvard Law School, is a self-styled "revolutionary"!)

The political discourse of the reformed neoliberalism draws on Castañeda's well-known distinction between the "good left" and the "bad left," variously known as old vs. modern, cosmopolitan vs. nationalist, responsible vs. irrational. (Unger has called it the "swashbuckling left" and the "well-behaved left.") Writing in Foreign Affairs in 2006, Castañeda set up the model for much subsequent discussion of the left in Latin America. He distinguishes between the left "that is modern, open-minded, reformist and internationalist . . . and the other, born of the great tradition of Latin American populism, [that] is nationalist, strident and close-minded." The good left is comprised of market-friendly social democrats who came out of orthodox left parties and finally saw the light. They include leaders of Brazil, Chile (under Michelle Bachelet) and Uruguay. Cuban economist Roberto Regalado asserts that what he calls their "neoliberal reforms" try to soften the "contradictions of capitalism without breaking with the system." The populist left refers to those in the caudillo tradition — Chavez, Cristina de Kirchner of Argentina, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Evo Morales of Bolivia. They are ostensibly more interested in personal power and in verbally lambasting the colossus of the North...

**Story Continued on Page 8 "Neoliberalism"**

# Presente!

In less than two months this summer we lost two giants of the solidarity movement; two men whose acts were inspiration to generations of people working in solidarity with the people of Latin America and in opposition to the depraved policies of our own government. Rev. Bill Callahan, co-founder of the Quixote Center and indefatigable champion of the Nicaraguan people, died July 10, at the age of 78 after a long battle with Parkinson's Disease. Rev. Lucius Walker, founder of IFCO/Pastors for Peace died suddenly on Sept. 7 at the age of 80. Cuba's Granma newspaper said it best: "We do not want to think of a world without Lucius Walker."



Both men's obituaries have been published numerous times elsewhere. I want to say simply that Bill Callahan taught me the value of "bold dreaming" and my most prized possession is my picture of me shaking hands with Fidel Castro with Lucius at my side telling Fidel who I was.

It is hard to imagine a world without either Bill or Lucius in it. On the other hand, bothmen changed the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of us whose task it is to carry on their work. We each have our time and then must pass the work on to others. That is as true for Bill and Lucius as it has been throughout history. But damn, I miss them.

Bill Callahan, presente! Lucius Walker, presente!
By Chuck Kaufman

## "Border" Continued from Page 1

Perhaps not wanting to accept the reality of the situation, her family member struggled to believe it was her. "Does she have a birth mark on her right cheek?" he asked. "Because if she doesn't, it isn't her."

Kat hesitated, "Sir, we're fairly certain that it's her body."

"But does she have a birthmark on her cheek? Maybe it's not her..." he pressed.

"Sir," Kat sighed, reluctant to explain the horrifying state of the corpse. "...there is no cheek." She listened as the hope audibly left his body. He later asked her not to mention how they had found the the girl, so that the rest of her family could picture her young, innocent face preserved after simply fainting in the desert. To this day, her younger brother, who was on the trip, struggles with feelings of guilt. His sister had selflessly made sure that he had enough water, and when she could no longer continue on, he was forced to leave her to die alone in the desert or stay and face her same fate.

It may be hard to imagine, but such stories are hardly unique. Convoluted drug and immigration policies have led to this massacre by complacency along the US-Mexican border. Each year, Derechos Humanos reports that an average of 200 immigrants' remains are discovered in Arizona alone. By refusing to address drug and immigration issues separately, US policy has cut off easier urban crossing points, and has funneled migrant routes into some of the most dangerous and unforgiving sections of the Sonoran desert. While this policy has by all accounts been ineffective in slowing immigration, it has forced migrants to walk farther distances and has increased their exposure not only to the natural dangers of the desert, but to the whims of drug traffickers, thieves and rapists in this virtual no-man's-land.

The contrast along the two sides of the border is clear. As Kat Rodriguez guided our tour, the Mexican and US approach to the problem were sharply juxtaposed. On the Mexican side of the border, there is a government agency with their primary task being to search for and rescue individuals that may have been left behind on the Mexican side of the border when

heading North. The Mexican government has deals with some bus companies to discount the travel of deported immigrants that wish to return home.

Also on the Mexican side of the border, we met a friendly group of volunteers that work with a Jesuit program to provide a soup kitchen for those that are deported and left on the Mexican side of the border. The kitchen provides meals to individuals as they are turned back. Across the street are shelters where the migrants can stay.

Just yards before you cross into the US, on the Mexican side of the border there is a memorial and shrine for the migrants that died trying to reach the other side. Moreover, the Mexican side of the fence is graffitied with an image of people trying to push the fence over, and a message that reads "Bridges are walls on their side." The US side is rusted and untouched.

On the Northern side of the border, the contrast is stark. The region is highly militarized. As we explored the area, we were stopped some 6 times, (in addition to the expected stops as you re-enter the country.) The guards are heavily armed, and most are also highly intimidating. Our van, along with our belongings, were searched on our way into Mexico at one check point. One of the members of our group was taken into questioning for filming a border guard as we entered at another point. The guards took his camera, and presumably viewed the tape as they held him.

The hideous, discolored eye-sore that is the wall cuts right through Nogales, dividing one side of the city from the other. Along it, border patrol watches from their trucks. Above them, National Guard troops sit under camouflaged net tarps in full gear. You can hardly believe that you are in the US border, and can be forgiven if images of Berlin and Palestine are all that race to mind.

This stark contrast made me think. But rather than making me think about traditional understandings of the border through an academic or political analysis, it made me think about the humanity of it all. Perhaps what the immigration debate needs isn't a better analysis. Maybe it isn't more statistics on the Drug War. Maybe it isn't more information on the causes of immigration and its relation to NAFTA. Perhaps what the immigration debate needs, is simply a mirror.

As Americans we need to take a look at this policy of militarization, of building a wall between us and our neighbors. We need to leave out questions of the economy, and excuses about drugs and crime, and really look at what is happening. We need to think about other places in the world where such militarization and barriers exist and have existed. Are those examples of the kind of country we want to become? Perhaps what the immigration debate needs is a reminder, not of macro-economic indicators, but of the reality on the ground, where 200 nearly unrecognizable remains of what were hopeful migrants are found in the Arizonan desert alone each year. So perhaps by holding a mirror to this debate, we can reflect upon our policies and their real effects on human beings looking to support their families. And then, maybe in this moment of clarity, uninterrupted by political analysis, we can be reminded of our humanity, which is slipping away.

## "Honduras" Continued from Page 2

San Pedro Sula on October 21st to raise money to pay for the $20,000 worth of leased sound equipment destroyed by the police... and to make the point that they will not be frightened away from demanding their democracy back.

While the unified Resistance was born in June 2009, two people in separate parts of the country told us they had "died" that day. They said that since they were already dead, they had nothing left to lose so they would not give up their struggle to "refound the State."

Since the coup ten journalists have been murdered as well as dozens of mid-level and grassroots leaders of the Resistance. The human rights abuses have increased since "Pepe" Lobo took office. It appeared to our delegation that the only thing holding back even greater repression is the failure of Lobo, and his strongest sponsor, the Obama administration, to reintegrate Honduras into the community of nations. The US recently failed to convince the OAS to reinstate Honduras. Reportedly the State Department will begin a new push to recognize Honduras in December.

Many people we met with see the long arm of the US behind the coup against President Zelaya. Certainly the Obama administration wasted no time increasing military aid and crowd suppression equipment after the coup. It has also inaugurated a second US military base in the country and a third is under construction. One person gave us a list of Zelaya's "offenses" before concluding, "Then (US Ambassador Hugo) Llorens was sent here to direct the coup." Among the things he listed:

1. When the US had to get Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles out of Panama, Zelaya refused a US request to give him asylum.
2. Zelaya put the franchise to provide oil to

Honduras out for bid and the US backed the companies that already held the franchise over the low bidder.

3. Zelaya proposed turning the US Palmerola Air Base into a much needed civilian airport.

4. Zelaya began to investigate internet phone companies that were costing the treasury millions of dollars and the US "had a fit."

5. The "final straw" was when Honduras joined the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA).

Berta Oliva, president of COFADEH, Honduras' most respected human rights group, told the delegation preceding ours that unless they get international accompaniment within the next few months, "the Resistance will be cooked up and served." The Alliance for Global Justice is a founding member of the US Honduras Solidarity Network. Groups in the network are striving to make sure we take delegations to Honduras at critical moments to use our privilege as US citizens to provide some protection to the Resistance. If you are interested in possibly going on an AFGJ-led delegation, send me an email at Chuck@AFGJ.org. Also needed are Spanish-fluent people who can spend 3 months to a year in Honduras accompanying the Resistance and documenting human rights abuses. If you think you might be qualified, send an email to: jennya@friendshipamericas.org

## "Neoliberalism" Continued from Page 5

than in developing policies for the poor.

The Buenos Aires Consensus (BAC) of 1997 formulated the amended neoliberalism which is called neostructuralism. It was drafted by the Latin American Policy Group led by Castañeda and Unger. Participants — the academic and political elite — came from the center and center-left of the political spectrum, including Lula and Ciro Gomes from Brazil, Vincente Fox from Mexico and Sergio Ramirez from Nicaragua. And the document builds on the taxonomy of the two lefts.

Critical of the excesses of neoliberalism and "market fundamentalism," the BAC takes as its touchstone the modernizing cosmopolitan, reformist left. It distances itself from the "populist developmentalism of yesteryear." The alternative to the old neoliberalism is, in the words of Marta Harnecker, an effort "to give capitalism a face-lift by making it more humane." Indeed, the BAC bears some resemblance to the watered-down social democracy of Western Europe known in the UK as the Third Way — what the Brazilian sociologist Emir Sader calls "tropical Blairism." (Tony Blair's Third Way was an effort to combine a modernized i.e., eviscerated, welfare state with markedly business-friendly policies.) The document's discussants emphasize the need for a strong state with greater powers of taxation so as to fund and administer social programs. The goal is not just to alleviate suffering but to democratize the market: "the market must be the chief allocator of resources, but it is up to the state to create the conditions for the needs of the poorest to be transformed into solvent demands which it is able to process."

One of the most important of these is education. This kinder, gentler capitalism with more social services like education and health is opposed to both laissez-faire economics and populism. But concern with structural changes, poverty and reform should not obscure the technocratic and individualistic thrust of this modified neoliberalism. The main rationale for educating the marginalized is that poor people need access to and information about the market economy so they can be efficiently inserted into it. This answer to poverty and inequality, like the Poverty Reduction Strategies promoted by the World Bank that find a role for NGOs but not poor people's organizations, is relentlessly apolitical. There is no space for organized popular movements. And absent is any notion that the balance of power in the global economy in effect disenfranchises people. All these biases are apparent in neostructuralism's posture toward education.

Education is seen through the lens of both poverty reduction and economic development. The BAC says that "poverty should nowadays be measured, not only in terms of income insufficiency, but chiefly in terms of the lack of basic opportunities for the development of each person . . . With citizens equipped with high educational standards, with knowledge and technology, we shall be ensuring sustainable development." Elsewhere, Roberto Mangabeira Unger makes a similar case for education. In addition, he recommends a minimum investment per child and a redistribution of educational resources among rich and poor. His vision, like that of BAC, focuses on progressive social policies "to equip the individual...education must rescue the child from its family, its class, its culture and its historical period."

As Samir Amin has noted in his recent book, From Capitalism to Civilization, this elevation of the individual historical actor, this by-passing of collective

identities and entities as irrelevant if not downright harmful is a hallmark of liberal and capitalist ideology. Such an ideology also has the advantage for the moderate left of delegitimizing social protest. Popular movements are severely constrained in this understanding. They must play strictly by the rules of institutional and electoral politics or advocate for citizen, i.e., individual, rights to be considered acceptable. (There is no role, says Unger flatly, for "anti-institutional or extra-institutional politics.") This domesticates and demobilizes oppositional energy; it also takes care of the instability, protest and unrest decried in the introductory remarks of the BAC.

The upshot of the recent proposals for a reformed neoliberalism is a mild redistributive element, which sits comfortably in a more or less orthodox market framework. Neostructuralism clearly does not address the vexing questions of gross inequality, class relations and social structures. It tries to buy off grassroots militancy with a commitment to increase human capital. In the end, Walden Bello has it right when he says that neostructuralism is about "social management," not "social liberation."

(Thanks to Steve Ellner for reading the manuscript and making suggestions. For sources, please write info@afgj.org)

## "Rights" Continued from Page 3

The licensing of humanitarian intervention to protect those rights was given a big boost by the fall of the Soviet Union and the "socialist bloc." At the heart of the political discourse, the dichotomy of capitalism/socialism was replaced by that of democracy/totalitarianism. With no challenge to capitalism, neoliberal economics and representative democracy were embraced not only by the political mainstream but by large segments of the left. As a result, human rights, including the political rights of liberal democracy, moved into the vacuum left by the decline of a left alternative. Humanitarian intervention in the service of human rights, freedom and democracy claimed the ideological high ground in the struggle against the recent forms of "totalitarianism" ranging from Serbia to Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia.

The most important episode in the story of humanitarian intervention was the 1999 Balkan War between NATO and Yugoslavia. Bill Clinton and Tony Blair justified the NATO campaign against the Serbs on the grounds of the ethnic cleansing of Albanians in Kosovo. But more was at stake here than the rights of an ethnic group and the fight for, in Blair's words, "the values of civilization."

"Thus did the discourse about human rights and humanitarian intervention come to be the legitimizing cover for American hegemony and global capitalism."

Under the moral rhetoric was the need to establish Western, especially US, dominance in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. By Clinton's own admission, this geopolitical aim was furthered by the war and the expansion of NATO into Eastern Europe. (These guaranteed access to the oil-rich Caspian Sea area and the strategically crucial zone between China and Russia.) Thus did the discourse about human rights and humanitarian intervention come to be the legitimizing cover for American hegemony and global capitalism.

If we solidarity activists and progressive opponents of militarism object to our recent military build-up in Latin America, we should think twice before supporting the principle of humanitarian intervention anywhere. This principle masks US imperial ambitions. It should be renamed "humanitarian imperialism."

Military intervention, even if it has a humanitarian rationale, causes collateral damage for the US in terms of domestic and world public opinion and a potential increase in terrorist blowback. But, there is a broad political consensus in support of humanitarian imperialism in the form of "democracy building." Taxpayer-funded agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) have replaced the Marines as the US government's foreign policy weapon of choice. Latin America has always been the laboratory for US military and diplomatic tools, no country more so than Nicaragua. Therefore we will briefly review the evolution of US "democracy

promotion" in Nicaragua.

The first success of the US's new democracy promotion imperialism was in Nicaragua's 1990 presidential election where the US won electorally what it failed to win by force of arms – the removal of Nicaragua's Sandinista government. It's success in Nicaragua marked a shift from a doctrine of "low intensity warfare" in which the US armed, trained, and funded mercenary armies or paramilitary gangs, to the current "democracy promotion" regime.

US intervention in Nicaragua's 1990 election was direct, overwhelming, and unapologetic. Its democracy promotion interventions since then have become much more sophisticated. But, US intervention in the 1990 Nicaraguan election included the creation of a 14-party unified opposition (including both the Nicaraguan Communist Party and the oligarchic Conservative Party), dictating the coalition's presidential nominee (Violeta Chamorro, widow of martyred newspaper editor Pedro Joaquin Chamorro), and overt expenditures by the NED alone of $12.5 million. The level of CIA expenditures has never been revealed. The US spent an estimated $20 per Nicaraguan voter to electorally oust the Sandinista government. By contrast, in the 1988 US presidential election, George H. W. Bush and Walter Mondale spent a combined $4 per US voter. The world media quickly labeled the Nicaragua election "free and fair."

Since that initial success, US democracy promotion programs have become more subtle. NED and USAID, whose development mission has increasingly taken second fiddle to election manipulation spending, no longer leave their fingerprints on the money that is transferred directly to political parties in opposition to governments opposed by the US  Instead contributions are made to "civil society" groups, and where gaps exist, to create civil society groups. The representative of the International Republican Institute, one of the four core groups of the NED, openly told a visiting international delegation in June 2006, "We created the Movement for Nicaragua." Movimiento por Nicaragua is a supposedly independent civil organization opposed to corruption which organized demonstrations and other actions against the 2006 Sandinista presidential candidate Daniel Ortega. Then US Ambassador Paul Trivelli told the same delegation that he had $12-13 million to spend on the election, but he denied that the US favored any particular candidate. Despite the massive US intervention, Ortega won a four-way race with 38% of the vote in November 2006.

There is nearly a unanimous political consensus in the US Congress in support of NED democracy promotion activities, which are characterized as nonpartisan skill building exercises such as training poll watchers. Just as liberals and progressives have supported some armed US interventions on "humanitarian" grounds, so do they support election interventions in the name of "democracy promotion." Indeed, Sen. Ted Kennedy was one of the strongest supporters of the NED in the US Senate while he lived. But, one need only look at the fact that political parties that do not share the US vision of free market representative democracy, do not receive skills-building training from the NED and its associated partners. In fact, capitalism and democracy are only compatible if all competitive political parties agree to privilege capital over democracy. In other words, to permit democratic choice only to the extent that it does not threaten capital's "right" to make a profit. That is exactly why the NED and USAID focus their greatest efforts in countries such as Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Bolivia where the conventional orthodoxy is being effectively challenged. Therefore, just as we recommend that solidarity activists and progressives think twice before supporting humanitarian military interventions, we should also think twice before supporting "democracy promotion" intervention anywhere. And just as humanitarian intervention should be renamed humanitarian imperialism, so should democracy promotion be renamed democracy imperialism.

(For sources, please write info@afgj.org)

## "FBI" Continued from Page 4

We do support the rights of all peoples to self-determination and self-defense in their quest to build a peaceful and just society and world and a better life for themselves and their children. We will not be intimidated or frightened away from working in solidarity with our sisters and brothers struggling against oppression anywhere in the world. We urge all our supporters to take action to oppose this latest assault on all of us who work peacefully for a better world. Please contact President Barack Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder to demand an end to the FBI raids and that the grand jury witch hunt be closed down immediately. Send messages to your Congressmen to let them know that their response will help determine how you vote.

# News from Nicaragua

*July 27 - September 28, 2010*

**Rain**

It has been raining for the entire period covered by this news summary. The La Niña weather phenomenon has to date resulted in a death toll of 54. Lake Managua is now higher than at the time of 1998's Hurricane Mitch. Massive crop losses threaten the progress made by the Ortega government in insuring food security. Throughout the country bridges and roads have been washed away and thousands of families have had to flee to higher ground. The Nicaragua Network has received numerous requests for aid. If you would like to contribute to flood relief and rebuilding, go to www.nicanet.org and click "donate". Page down to "pther" and enter "flood relief." You can also send a check to Nicaragua Network, 1247 E St., SE, Washington, DC 20003. Write "flood relief" in the memo line.

A bridge damaged by heavy rain in Quezalguaque, Nicaragua. (Photo: PressTV)

**Politics**

Nicaragua's institutional crisis continues as neither the opposition nor the Sandinistas (FSLN) can muster the 56 vote super majority in the National Assembly to elect 25 high level posts for which the terms have expired. In January, President Daniel Ortega issued a decree allowing sitting magistrates of the Supreme Court, Supreme Electoral Council, and numerous executive branch agencies to continue in their positions until their replacements are elected. The 25 positions are split between the FSLN and the Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) according to a decade old deal. PLC officials are refusing to continue once their terms expire leaving the courts and electoral authority in the hands of the FSLN. The Supreme Court has begun emitting decisions from a long backlog due to the political deadlock, and Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) President Roberto Rivas says the CSE will begin organizing the November 2011 elections.

Meanwhile, the opposition continues to be unable to unify behind a single candidate for next year's presidential election. Former president Arnoldo Aleman will head the PLC ticket, short-circuiting a unified right-wing primary promoted by the Permanent Commission on Human Rights (CPDH), which is giving up the effort. Eduardo Montealegre, who was the US's candidate in 2006, says he will drop out of the race in favor of "consensus" candidate, Radio Corporacion head Fabio Gadea Mantilla, who serves in the Central American Parliament. So Ortega appears to be facing a fractured opposition and he has strong poll numbers due to rising living standards from his poverty reduction programs and disgust with the nay-saying opposition by the business community. Even the US appears to accept the fact that they will be dealing with Ortega for another five years. Ambassador Robert Callahan has toned down his rhetoric and several visiting US officials have claimed that the US has no preferred candidate in the election.

However, do not expect that US efforts to interfere in the electoral process through the National Endowment for Democracy and US Agency for International Development will slacken. They will simply continue building the right-wing for the following electoral cycle.

**International**

Nicaragua, the safest country in Central America, is the only country where drug traffickers have been unable to establish a foothold thanks to aggressive enforcement by Nicaragua's mostly corruption free National Police

and army. And now, the World Bank, in its publication "Doing Business 2010," says it is also the best country in Central America in which to invest. Based on Nicaragua's drug fighting record, President Ortega appealed to the US for more funding for the "drug war" than the US$2 million it is getting under the Merida Initiative. US Ambassador Callahan, said on Sept. 10 that the United States has provided US$24 million in assistance for the drug war, more than the US$2 million annually that President Daniel Ortega said the US was providing to Nicaragua to fight traffickers attempting to get drugs to the US market. Callahan insisted that, besides monies provided under Plan Merida, other funding for training, computers and even a program of education to prevent drug use in Nicaragua should be included as well.

US Navy repairs baseball risers in Bluefields, Nicaragua. (Photo: U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Samuel R. Beyers)

Nicaragua is enjoying warmer relations with the US as demonstrated by the Secretary of State issuing the annual "waiver" allowing Nicaragua to continue to receive US aid based on "progress" in resolving property disputes with US citizens. Nevertheless, there were two bumps in the road in September. The more serious was that the US State Department issued its highly politicized and arrogant annual "report card" judging other countries on cooperation for fighting terrorism or for "sponsoring terrorism." The report accused Nicaragua of having a corrupt and highly politicized judiciary that could be taken advantage of by terrorists and said it had expanded ties with Iran. The report noted that Nicaragua had granted asylum to accused collaborators of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), including Doris Torres and Martha Perez who survived an attack by the Colombian Army inside Ecuador. The report admitted that, "[t]here is no knowledge of known terrorist groups operating openly in Nicaragua; nevertheless retired and inactive members of the FARC and the ETA [Basque Homeland and Freedom] reside in Nicaragua."

The less serious bump involved the Sept. 15 docking of the US naval hospital ship Iwo Jima off the coast of Bluefields as part of a humanitarian and medical mission. There were patients causing US Ambassador Callahan to grumble that the Nicaraguan government had not adequately publicized the visit. In fact, recent Cuban and Nicaraguan medical brigades in the vicinity have reduced the medical backlog, plus residents may have been reluctant to be flown to a US warship. The Iwo Jima came to Nicaragua from Costa Rica where it was the first of 46 US war ships authorized to dock there by that country's legislature. The Costa Rican Constitutional Court has agreed to hear a case challenging the constitutionality of the permission, but it is yet to rule. Many claim that the Constitutional Court is merely stalling while the permission runs out. Opposition to the massive US military presence is strong in Costa Rica and the region. Representatives of 54 political parties of all tendencies from Central America and the Dominican Republic, meeting in El Salvador, agreed to ask the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) and the Central American Court of Justice to review and evaluate the agreement. Costa Rica has officially assured Nicaragua that there will be no US bases on its territory.

Two stories about Nicaragua were generated in the United States. The happy one was that Francisco Campbell was accepted by the US as Nicaragua's new ambassador after two years with that position vacant. Campbell said his first priority will be to deal with the needs of Nicaraguan citizens in the US. The sad story was the discovery of the body of Nicaragua's Consul in New York, Cesar Antonio Mercado Pavon, who was found dead in his Bronx apartment. Police have yet to rule whether his death from a slashed throat and stabbing in the stomach were murder or suicide.

And finally, at the end of July, US Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis visited Nicaragua where she toured free trade zones in Managua, to promote the "Better Work" program of the US Department of Labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and International Financial Corporation (IFC). She concluded her second visit to the birthplace of her

mother, Juana Solis, with a family visit in Jinotega. She said of her two-day visit with aunts and cousins, "They are struggling and they see that there is change in Nicaragua and they have much hope." While there, she visited projects financed by the US and said she encountered much hope among the people, principally the youth. "Nicaragua is a beautiful place with great opportunities not understood by the rest of the world or by my country. Hopefully we will be able to work to create possibilities to be able to work together."

**Economy/Poverty Reduction**

In economic news, gold has now surpassed sugar as Nicaragua's third largest export product, and high coffee prices are expected to offset a lower yield in the upcoming 2010-2011 harvest season. Officials also expect the total number of tourists to exceed one million in 2010 for the first time. Nearly 108,000 public and private sector Nicaraguan workers will receive a pay boost of 6% negotiated among the government, employers and unions. The economy of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN) also got a big potential boost with the completion of a runway capable of handling the biggest planes as part of a $50 million modernization of the Bilwi/Puerto Cabesas airport. Forty-two communites in the RAAN are also scheduled to receive solar facilities including internet and phone connections, part of the Ortega government's efforts to serve this historically marginalized region.

Nicaragua's Gini coefficient has dropped from .41 to .36 since 2005 making Nicaragua the least unequal country in Central America. According to respected independent economist Nester Avendaño, director of Consultants for Business Development (COPADES), Nicaragua's economy grew by 7% in the second trimester compared to the same period in 2009. Export income totaled US$1.316 billion for the first eight months of the year. Alejandro Martinez Cuenca, director of the International Foundation on the Global Economic Challenge (FIDEG), noting that preliminary data from his poverty survey had been questioned in the opposition media, said that "the tendency toward the continuing reduction in poverty, in general, is clearly reflected." He said that researchers were in the field right now with the goal of determining if the decline continues in 2010. The survey showed extreme poverty had declined by 7.5 percentage points between 2005 and 2009. Martinez Cuenca said that "all Nicaraguans should be happy that extreme poverty was reduced by more than 300,000 Nicaraguans in the period from 2005 to 2009, and instead of making this another element for polarization…it should be an element that brings us together." He said that "the reduction in poverty is not just the result of the efforts of the government in power, but of the thousands of efforts that have been made from different perspectives." However, opposition politicians and media continued to make absurd pronouncements about Martinez' poverty reduction findings and Avendaño's economic growth findings in an effort to "prove" that the Ortega government was not responsible for either. Much of Nicaragua's economic advances have been thanks to cooperative aid from Venezuelan which, according to an article in the McClatchy Newspapers, has reached over US$1 billion over the last four years. Martinez noted, "The principle factor is that the government has had access to unlimited resources from Venezuela, and these have gone toward the rural sector; this money has had an impact."

One of the areas where Venezuelan aid has been invested is in affordable housing. Chamber of Construction President Mario Zelaya said the construction sector has grown thanks to the affordable housing program developed by the government of President Daniel Ortega. Some 2,000 low-cost houses have been built and sold with bank financing. Zelaya said construction of affordable housing had arrested the fall in new housing starts. The Sandinista government announced that, because of damage from the rains, it has moved forward the second phase of its "Plan Roof." Sixty-four thousand families will receive 10 galvanized roofing sheets each. The goal is to allow the poorest of the poor to replace plastic tarp roofing with galvanized sheets. The first phase of the "Plan Roof" provided galvanized roofing to 60,000 families. A third phase of the project is planned for 2011.

**Environment**

Nicaragua is complaining to Costa Rica about approval of a huge open pit gold mine that environmentalists warn endangers the Rio San Juan and Nicaragua's tourism industry. Costa Rica is complaining to Nicaragua about a project to dredge and clean the Rio San Juan near its Caribbean mouth, which will return the river to its original course and divert water from Costa Rica. Environmentalists from Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador Nicaragua and Spain organized a 200 kilometer car caravan trip to protest the planned gold mine. Costa Rica deported seven young Nicaraguan environmentalists saying they had violated the terms of their visas.

The Brito Hydroelectric Project, evidently contemplated in an accord between the Nicaraguan and Brazilian governments, has provoked highly negative reactions from environmentalists and residents of El Castillo and other towns along the Rio San Juan. The project would include the construction of dams on the San Juan and on rivers that drain into Lake Cocibolca (Nicaragua) at a cost of US$600 million. It would produce 250 megawatts of electricity. The planned hydroelectric dam at Tumarin on the Rio Grande de Matagalpa has also provoked expressions of concern from those worried about its impact on the environment and about whether benefits from the facility will reach the local inhabitants of the region, many of whom are members of indigenous groups who have special rights under the Nicaraguan constitution and Autonomy Law.

In other environmental news, residents of the ocean shore community of Poneloya have protested the activities of shrimp farmers in the area that they say are drying out the local mangrove swamps.

A massive release of a chemical—possibly Mercaptan—forced the closure of two schools and sent 24 young students to the hospital in Tipitapa. Residents have complained about odors from the Química Borden Centroamerica, S.A. (QUIBOR) for five years and there have been several cases of children suffering vomiting, headaches, skin, eye and respiratory problems prior to Tuesday's massive release of fumes.

A report presented to Nicaragua's National Assembly by attorney Veronica Elizabeth Navarro reveals substantial detail about a conspiracy by Dole Food Company to thwart justice for Nicaraguan banana workers affected by the pesticide known as Nemagon just when they were winning court cases against the transnational corporation.

*For complete stories on the issues summarized above visit www.nicanet.org/?cat=5 for archives of the weekly Nicaragua News Bulletin.*

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