



## The Egypt Paradox & US Government Influence

*By George Pauk, M.D. (Pauk is a member of the AFGJ board.)*

**M**any are now asking what the role of the USA has been and is now in the support of the repressive Mubarak regime and the transition from it. With the crisis of Egypt in mind, I looked

at the International Republican Institute (IRI) Egypt 2005 report in a download from their website. The report of their 2005 delegation to Egypt was co-authored by the IRI and The United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It is a classic example of our confused and mostly negative foreign policy. It rings a familiar bell for similar tragic situations in the Latin American nations of our own Western Hemisphere.

The Egypt report is twenty-three pages of observations, critiques and recommendations for the election processes of that nation. It contains

the biographies of the delegation participants, many of them with IRI positions. Some of the delegation participants have relevant education and experience in international and Middle East relations.

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Egyptian protester (Photo: REUTERS / Goran Tomasevic)

# Time to End the US Culture of Militarism

By Chuck Kaufman (Kaufman is an AFGJ National Co-Coordinator.)

**A**t this writing 72 organizations have endorsed the Latin America Solidarity Coalition's April 8-10, 2011 conference to build a stronger movement to end US militarism and the militarization of relations with Latin America. The conference will be held in Washington, DC at American University. With an expected participation in excess of 400 Latin America solidarity and peace and justice activists including people of faith, labor, youth and students, immigrants, veterans, women, environmentalists, academics and more, this conference promises to be one of the most important conferences of this year.

The United States is at a crossroads. Down one road lies permanent war, a stagnant economy and loss of liberty. Down the other lies a new world of cooperation, prosperity and freedom. This conference is all about how we can work together to travel on the road to a new and better world. The anti-war movement became disillusioned with our failure to stop the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq. We can't afford to be disillusioned. Disillusionment can only hand victory to the warmongers and those who profit from war. The recent peoples' victories in Egypt and Tunisia prove that sudden change can result from an aroused and resolute people.

It is time for us to take a longer view of our efforts and to look to the abolition movement as our inspiration. We cannot imagine a return

to chattel slavery in our country, yet at one time that immoral institution looked to be as deeply imbedded in our culture as militarism appears today. The fact that slavery is today a morally repugnant concept proves that cultures can be changed and gives us reason to persevere in our efforts to change the culture of US militarism.

The LASC conference on US militarism will draw together diverse sectors to educate each other and to strategize together about what we need to do to build a movement that can eventually topple the dominant paradigm of violence in our country. The movement to end US militarism is not new. My great grandfather was a conscientious objector in the Civil War. Groups like Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and War Resisters League were formed in opposition to the carnage of World War I. Our movement is a long one; one in which success is a goal which is over the current horizon of our sight. But that was also true for the abolition movement and yet it ultimately succeeded, as will we.

I urge you to join us April 8-10 in Washington, DC. Come early and stay late for SOA Watch's Week of Action as well. You can see a list of endorsers, housing options, registration form and other information on the LASC webpage [www.lasolidarity.org](http://www.lasolidarity.org). If your organization would like to endorse and promote the conference you are welcome to email me at [chuck@AFGJ.org](mailto:chuck@AFGJ.org). Our country is indeed at a crossroad. This conference is one small step down the correct branching of the road. I want you to be part of it.

Register now to help build a larger movement to end US militarism and the militarization of US relations with Latin America and the world. Join Latin America solidarity activists, people of faith, academics, youth and students, anti-war and immigration activists, labor, women, and all sectors which are working to build a better world. See below for the list of endorsers. If your group would like to endorse, send an email to [AFGJ@AFGJ.org](mailto:AFGJ@AFGJ.org). Endorsing groups are invited to submit workshop proposals to [stansfieldsmith@yahoo.com](mailto:stansfieldsmith@yahoo.com). Please join us for a weekend of plenary meetings and workshops to educate and inspire each other and to plan actions, strategies,

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**PHOTO  
HIGHLIGHT:**

Many Bolivians participated in “chew ins” to protest the criminalization of chewing coca leaves. To the right, a number of Bolivians chew coca leaves. (Photo: AFP/Getty Images/Aizar Raldes)



# Bolivian Coca Leaves, Drug War & Trade: Key Ingredients in a Cocktail of Discrimination

*By Jamie Way, M.A. (Way is Media & Communications Coordinator for AFGJ.)*

For generations coca leaves have held an important traditional role in Bolivian indigenous culture. However, despite the fact that coca leaves serve non-narcotic ritual and nutritional purposes for the vast majority of the Bolivian population, they remain illegal according to international law. Bolivian President Evo Morales (a former leader of a coca growers union and indigenous leader) has sought to challenge the UN ban. In 2009, his nation proposed the elimination of just two items in Article 49 of the UN’s 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs. If no country raised an objection, the amendment would have passed on Jan. 31st 2011, lifting the ban and taking a major step in eliminating the stigma surrounding many native traditions. Unfortunately, the US, Britain and Sweden refused to withdraw their objections and the ban remains, despite the fact that when used in its natural form for chewing, teas, etc. coca leaf acts merely as a mild stimulant (similar to coffee) and acts to curb the effects of altitude sickness.

While Bolivia insists on the benefits of non-narcotic coca use, the US (and fellow objectors) claims to be concerned that lifting this ban would set a dangerous precedent and hurt the never-ending “War on Drugs.” However, a closer look at the original ban, arguments about the drug war and the differential

application of trade policy lay bare the sad truth that the economic and power interests of today maintain the cultural and ethnic racism of the past. This case highlights the fact that discourses on the drug war and trade morality are differentially applied to indigenous peoples and marginalized populations, while dominant groups continue to create climates conducive to their own success.

To understand how trade and the drug war are used (intentionally or not) as mechanisms that maintain old racial and class lines, it is important to understand current and past attitudes toward coca. Clearly, outlawing or punishing different aspects and traits found in indigenous culture has been a source for oppression for centuries, but rarely is this flawed rationale laid so bare as in the case of coca leaves.

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“Bolivia”**

# Costa Rica - Nicaragua Border Conflict

By Chuck Kaufman (Kaufmann is an AFGJ National Co-Coordinator.)

Nicaragua has been in the US corporate press more often recently. Unfortunately, it has all been bad press, and unfair at that. Even some friendly allies like the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA) have fallen for the anti-Nicaragua biased reporting.

If you were to believe the corporate press you would think that Nicaragua has invaded Costa Rican territory with armed troops. You might also believe that Costa Rica is helpless against the Nicaraguan onslaught because it abolished its army in 1948. And, of course, all this is because Nicaragua is ruled by that communist dictator, Daniel Ortega. All of this is disinformation!

So what is this really all about?

Treaty of 1858, the Cleveland Arbitration Award of 1888 and the Alexander Arbitration Award of 1896. The first arbitration award established Nicaragua's right to maintain navigation on the river without permission of Costa Rica, and the second established "the first channel met" from Harbor Head Lagoon as the border at the shifting river's mouth.

Later Costa Rican governments have tried to change the treaties but in 2009 the International Court of Justice (World Court) ruled in Nicaragua's favor. The World Court ruling also established that over three hundred border markers be emplaced along the river's bank so that there would not be future conflicts. However, Costa Rica has agreed to the location of only a couple dozen markers. Costa Rica is still hoping to get a favorable ruling from the World Court, but according to the 1888 arbitration they are entitled only to damages if, in fact, Nicaragua's dredging caused any damages. Costa Rica has free right of navigation on the river with the restriction that Nicaragua will not allow armed

vessels. Costa Rica has complained about that restriction for years.

Nicaragua did move troops to an island in the swampy delta where the San Juan River flows into the Caribbean. But since the entire river is within Nicaragua, Costa Rica's claim that the troops have invaded its territory has no merit. The purpose of the troops is to prevent drug trafficking, something Nicaragua has done much more successfully than its southern neighbor. In late January, Nicaragua broke up a drug gang operating from one of the small San Juan River islands, arresting five traffickers. They seized drugs and heavy weapons.

In addition, Costa Rica's claim that it doesn't have an army is largely a matter of semantics. In the 1980s, while it was

On one level it is about Costa Rica's complaints about Nicaragua dredging the mouth of the San Juan River which forms the border between the two countries. Unlike most river borders, they don't share the river. It is entirely in Nicaragua. Costa Rica stops at the river's edge. This is based on international treaties signed by both countries beginning with the Cañas- Jerez

hosting the southern front of the contra war, the United States armed and trained portions of Costa Rica's police as if it were an army. Today Costa Rica's "defense" budget is three times that of Nicaragua's military budget. And according to the "CIA - The World Factbook," Costa Rica's military spending is the highest in Central America in terms of percentage of GDP. This is an inconvenient truth because it is nice to think of Costa Rica as an unarmed, peaceful country. **Story Continued on Page 10 "Border Conflict"**



# New Ager Spirituality & Latin American Politics

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

It has been said that Progressives underrate the role of ideas and cultural attitudes in the political arena; even more, they disregard the spiritual side of social change. Talk of “spirit” or “soul” makes us uncomfortable — it seems like a romantic anachronism. The other side of the coin is that proponents of a spiritual approach to social action, and I am thinking here of supporters of a New Age spirituality, such as engaged Buddhism, suggest that politics is secondary to inner transformation, that spiritual or ethical change must be the basis for any larger shift in social arrangements. New Age spirituality is an amalgam of therapeutic and philosophical movements, often drawing on non-western spiritual traditions; it is widely influential in modern American life. New Age thinking regards greed, selfishness and materialism as the cause of social malaise and calls for their opposites as the key to social transformation. By thus defining politics in moral terms, New Age spirituality sidesteps some knotty questions: what does the politics of radical change require? What structural obstacles must be addressed and, of those, which most urgently, if we are to move toward sustainable development, peace and justice?

Another drawback of New Age thinking from the vantage point of a solidarity activist is its failure to recognize that thinking and spirituality do not take place in a vacuum. Rather they always take place in a particular social context. A new consciousness which rejects our domination of nature and people, such as a New Age sensibility, does not exist in the clouds. It is situated on a much broader terrain than personal growth; it reflects our social relations. Like capitalist social structures which it never challenges, New Age thinking reflects the individualistic and community-dissolving ethos of consumer capitalism.

It is no accident, I think, that the New Age path has nothing to say about capitalism; how its culture predisposes middle-class Americans to define spiritual life as inward and personal, as opposed to, say, liberation theology. (Both the Kripalu Center in Massachusetts and the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies in New York State have a similar New Age motto — we change the world one person or heart at a time.) Liberation theology in Latin America teaches

solidarity with and among the poor and oppressed, not self-preoccupation. The emphasis on “getting in touch with the self” is a hallmark of New Age thinking, even as it tries to escape the self through communion with nature or the cosmos.

I had written on New Age spirituality and solidarity activism some years ago, and I was reminded of their connection or lack thereof when I went to the Omega Institute in January. Omega is dedicated to healing the individual and ultimately, the world. The means — an holistic approach that integrates body, mind and spirit. The various workshops I attended had a common orientation: (reversing Marx) consciousness is the primary reality and the material world is shaped by it; we need a change of consciousness if we want to change the world. That change of consciousness involves a greater sense of connection to the whole of life — to other people, to the world around us. It means thinking less about what the ego wants and more about how we are all interconnected in a great web of life. The sense of connectedness, it seemed to me, was pretty abstract, even metaphysical. Nothing wrong with that, except it is not tied to the cultivation of solidarity among historical actors, members of concrete communities. (I am thinking here of the community councils in Chavez’s Venezuela or the grassroots organizations created by the Sandinista Revolution in the 1980s.)

At Omega in January 2011, “Achieving Peace through Higher Consciousness” was the name of the workshop that John Perkins gave. I was interested in what he had to say about political and social change because of the years that he and his consulting firm spent working with the World Bank in Latin America. In the 1970s, he was involved with World Bank loans and corporate investment there, which, in hindsight, only benefited local elites and foreign investors. His initial enthusiasm for this enterprise and his subsequent defection from the corporate world and the American imperial project was the subject of his widely-read Confessions of an Economic Hit Man (2004).

In The Secret History of American Empire (2007) he lauded the current crop of left-leaning leaders in Latin America...

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These individuals probably were flattered to enjoy the others company in the work and site visits of the delegation. I suspect that it was a pleasant expense paid trip with the challenge of the submission of information for the compilation of scholarly observations and data. Perhaps the staff of the IRI served the delegation with support and promised fulfillment of the participants’ desire to serve the cause of international leadership and assistance. Unfortunately, it was not so.

I have been there, -- in a committed group of a delegation in a foreign land. It is “committee work”. Ordinary process stuff, yes, but there is one dominant characteristic of most delegation reports and most certainly the IRI Egypt report. That is, that the make-up of the group, and most important, the final edit and conclusions of the final report are the important factors in the contributions of the report. The integrity of the entire delegation operation depends on the goals and integrity of the sponsoring institution.

The IRI has been one of the group players of US political influence on the international scene for many years. The National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is an even larger organization similarly situated by Congress with funds to pass down money to the IRI and other organizations such as the National Democratic Institute, American Center for International Labor Solidarity, and the Center for International Private Enterprise. These organizations are almost completely unknown to the American public and they present a false face in their limited public appearance. My Senator, John McCain, has been the chairman of the board of directors of the IRI for many years. The board is made up of panoply of right wing radicals.

Every year there is a very quiet disbursement of many millions of our tax dollars to the NED and the IRI from Congress and some additions from thankful corporations. The funds give the staff of these organizations a great luxury of support and power to dispense the money into the hands of many obscure and unaccountable organizations in other nations.

They have a thin veneer of supporting women’s and private enterprise groups. They masquerade as enablers of public interest, public education and community participation in government. Their main characteristic is to carry out the many actions that support the goals of the most vigorous and rapacious capitalism of corporate America. They are concentrated in actions that oppose socially progressive government. They spend our money to unite right wing parties and organizations to support right wing candidates against progressive candidates and parties.

The IRI and the NED have a wealth of experience in this work because of the generous and hands off support of our tax dollars. Tens of millions of our dollars are dispensed yearly by our Congress and approved by our Presidents. USAID and corporations add contributions that make public accounting impossible. They have built a consortium of individuals and front organizations in other nations. Unfortunately, many of our universities now have at least a few faculty members in the programs of international studies who gained their field experience and resumes as staff supported workers and consultants in these right wing organizations.

The role of the NED, IRI and some other right wing organizations is best illustrated in Nicaragua. Nicaragua and similar nations seem to be

the laboratory for these organizations to work out the methods they apply in other nations. In Nicaragua, the NED and IRI have spent millions of dollars in recent years to try to bring together the right wing political parties and attack the Sandinista party. In the aftermath of the US sponsored contra war, the NED and the IRI have done much to try to stop the Sandinistas from regaining power through the ballot box. Our funds were used to spend more per voter for Violeta Chamorro’s 1990 campaign than George H. W. Bush and Michael Dukakis spent combined per US voter in 1988. The NED claimed success in managing Nicaragua’s 1990 election. NED also was heavily involved in the fraudulent next election in 1996. Progressives have nevertheless won in recent years but the NED and the

“ They spend our money to unite right wing parties and organizations to support right wing candidates ...”

IRI continue to distort the political process through its selective funding of civil society, dividing popular movements, issuing biased polls and questionably biased funding for poll watching. The offensive work of our government-funded organizations has been to hobble Nicaraguan sovereignty and to deny its people the right to self-determination.

Another recent and blatant example is the 2009 coup government run election in Honduras. International election monitors from the OAS, EU, and Carter Center all refused to monitor the following illegitimate election. But the IRI sent its own politically biased “monitors” who declared the boycotted election “free and fair.” Unfortunately, our State Department made that the official US position.

In Egypt our nation has proceeded with almost thirty years support of a military dictator. We have sent 40 to 60 billion dollars and countless other billions of in-kind support to maintain the brutal dictatorship, army and secret police of Hosni Mubarak. He systematically killed, imprisoned or excluded the potential leadership of all political opposition. We used this dictator’s haunts as hidden sites for our torture renditions. We pretend to have encouraged the development of democracy there but the record shows our influence to have been otherwise. We are definitely complicit in the actions of this dictator who has now been forced to step down after two weeks of courageous action in the streets by hundreds of thousands of Egyptians, over 300 of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice. Some organizations are calling for the USA to face up to the responsibility of making a frank apology to the Egyptian people.

Our pundits and “talking heads” in the media are apparently not aware of the works of the IRI and NED. They discuss the crisis in Egypt and mostly conclude that the best course for “stability” is with the military. We have been sending over a billion dollars a year to the Egyptian military and has it produced a stable situation? Are we now and will we in the future be comfortable with their huge military? The US is well known internationally for interventions on a broad front. Witness the events of Chile, Panama, Columbia, Cuba, Honduras, etc. and our teaching program for torture and coups at Fort Benning, Georgia. It is debatable whether militarism or political interference is the more prominent component of our failed foreign policy. Probably, military support is so inefficient and inappropriate that the social and political work of organizations such as USAID, NED, IRI, etc. is necessary to maintain the military leaders in power. It is

obvious that both factors appear to be important to our leaders in the Pentagon and the Department of State.

The report of the 2005 IRI delegation to Egypt is instructive on the mechanics of influence. It produced many pages of detailed notes about the problems with the election and how elections and politics could be done in Egypt. Then, in the conclusion summary, probably written by IRI staff, it simply states: “There is little reason to believe that the will of Egyptians who voted was averted. While people may disagree about the overall vote count, there are few who believe any outcome would have been different than a strong majority of support for President Mubarak.”

Another statement from the IRI about their work is: “IRI works with Egyptian activists to strengthen their knowledge of political party development, campaign strategy and public opinion research. IRI also provides civil society groups with trainings on how to hold municipal councils accountable.”

A major push of the 2005 report is a call for Egypt to allow elections observers and other services provided by organizations such as IRI. Dictator Mubarak had cleverly not allowed that sort of intervention in Egypt. Unfortunately, until recently, most of the other nations where the IRI has been working to interfere in internal politics have not recognized the hypocrisy of its stated goals of democracy and community participation. One of the worst consequences of the US government’s efforts to manipulate other countries’ elections is that international election monitoring is now rightfully viewed with suspicion and outright hostility.

Some nations are now trying to ban the NED and IRI influence, but there are large “regional” organizations of NED and the IRI that continue the nefarious anti-democracy meddling. The days of naiveté about election observers have passed. The real honest observer organizations are being crowded out by the vigorous actions of so-called democracy organizations. The close association of USAID with these organizations may also mean that some nations will forgo some much-needed assistance.

What is the lesson here? Of course there are many points such as the lack of transparency of our government’s finance of such ideological and political and interventionist organizations, the blatant and illegal actions of our secretive organizations working in other nations. Most objectionable to our sense of justice is the strange role of delegations in furthering the interests of organizations that lie and pretend to serve democracy but actually serve commercial, military and

imperialistic interests of some organizations here in the United States.

It can be fulfilling to participate in the delegation work of an organization. Many shades of progressive and conservative, left or right, religious or secular, scholarly or voluntary worker, delegations are happening now. It is as if there is warfare of delegations.

Delegations are used now by many organizations to work for the goals of those organizations in other countries and in our own nation. We often hear our politicians and academics testify to us that they have “just returned from a trip” to an interesting country. What the American public does not hear is that some of the right wing politicians are traveling in concert with NED and the IRI and making frank threats of economic and military intervention in those nations.

The delegations of the Alliance for Global Justice and other similar organizations are quite different than most. We are oriented towards obtaining a presence and information in the nation visited in order to educate the public of our own nation. The influence of AFGJ and our related organizations is likely to occur only indirectly for the people of the visited nation. We see the main problem as our nation’s lack of knowledge and poor policies of intervention in the other nations of the world. We are also self-funded thus avoiding the conflicts of interest that USAID and corporate interests impose.

We call for much greater transparency of delegation work by all organizations. We strongly disagree with the motive and practice of delegations of many other organizations that aim to use the opportunity to infiltrate and subvert organizations or the government of other nations. It is also obvious that our spy “intelligence” agencies use delegations to slip in their staff people. The American public needs to become aware and demand an end of our government’s actions in other nations that we would not tolerate here.

In the case of the NED and IRI, we call for an end to government funding with our tax dollars because they have repeatedly violated the most basic concepts of fairness, truth and justice in their interventions. They are arrogant organizations representing narrow ideologies, misrepresenting themselves to the public, producing bad results, alienating other nations and feeding at our tax trough. The paradox is that our government proposes

democracy and counters progress toward democracy.

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and organizing tools to build a greater movement to overcome US militarism. Participate in SOA Watch’s Days of Action including lobbying and direct action to shut down the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, better known as the School of the Americas. Agitate for closing US military bases in Latin America and for an end to US militarization throughout the Americas and the world. Click [HERE](#) to register.

US militarism affects both the entire world and everything about our daily lives. If you are working to end US wars, morally stand in favor of peace, are in solidarity with the oppressed, are working to end racism and the criminalization of immigrants, stand solidly in favor of our First Amendment freedoms or are working to create new economic models that defend the interests of workers and farmers over those of corporations and bankers – then you should attend this conference to build a strong and unified movement against US militarism.

Some topics covered by this conference will include: US military bases, military spending, immigration and border militarization, coups, war profiteers, privatization of war, closing the School of the Americas, foreign military and police aid, growing our skills in media, research, and other organizing, counter recruitment and support for active duty resisters, US relations with Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Mexico, Honduras, etc., organizing within sectors to resist militarism, cross movement organizing, domestic costs of militarism, direct action, skills building and much more.

Register [HERE](#) and visit the LASC webpage at [www.lasolidarity.org](http://www.lasolidarity.org) for low-cost and free housing options. Visit the webpage frequently to see updates on workshops, plenary speakers, direct actions and other preparatory information. Visit the SOA Watch Days of Action web page for details on actions scheduled from April 4-11, 2011. We recommend that you plan your trip to participate in SOA Watch’s activities before the conference and direct action on April 11.

“US militarism affects both the entire world and everything about our daily lives.”



### “Bolivia” Continued from Page 3

Like many traditional native practices, as coca leaf chewing came into greater contact with “modern” Western culture it came to be viewed in a negative light. In 1951, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs put out a report on the three “long-range problems” that it had dealt with in the previous year, one of which was the “question of the chewing of the coca leaf in some countries of Latin America.” The report included the following comments, which are worth quoting at length:

“The main conclusion of the report is that coca-leaf chewing *has harmful effects*, and that since *the habit is the consequence of a number of unfavourable social and economic factors*, the solution of the problem involves two fundamental and parallel aspects: the need for improving the living conditions of the population amongst which chewing is a general habit, and the need for initiating simultaneously a governmental policy to limit the production of coca leaf, to control its distribution, and eradicate the practice of chewing it.” (Emphasis added.)

As we can see here, just as in numerous other cases, class and ethnic distinctions are used to stigmatize coca leaves. Coca leaf chewing, was not seen as a cultural tradition, but rather as a bad habit of the poor and overworked lower native class. Therefore, the West would be justified in entering communities, criminalizing their practices and then using development programs to assimilate them with “proper” economic and social activities. Ten years after this report was filed coca leaf chewing was outlawed, despite the fact that today there is a general scientific consensus that chewing the leaves does not have negative health impacts.

Regardless, because the same leaf can be used to produce the narcotic cocaine, some argue that it should be limited. (Bolivia has made efforts to do so and sets limitation on cultivation.) If this was the only justification for stopping the leaves production, however, the ban would have to be uniformly applied, but this is not the case.

The American-based corporation Coca-Cola still imports what is rumored to be 8 tons of coca leaf each year. Before the company utilizes the leaf in its popular soft-drink, the cocaine alkaloids are removed. So while native people who chew the leaf as they work

within the country where the coca was grown are considered criminals, this multinational corporation can act in complete disregard of international law. It not only purchases and imports coca, it makes a large profit selling it. This is particularly interesting in light of a variety of products that are for sale in Bolivia and of great popularity. In the country, Bolivians can buy products from tooth paste to tea that contain coca. In fact, the country is even home to multiple potential Coca-Cola competitor coca-based soft-drinks, including the similarly branded and marketed Coca-Cola.

For some time now, discourses of trade morality have been differentially applied to indigenous peoples and marginalized populations to support the trade and capital interests of dominant groups. Seen in subsidies, hidden regulations, etc. is the fact that the US fails to adhere to its own championed rules and free market policy stances. What is particularly interesting is that in this case we can see how the morality of trade is not only differentially imposed on the marginalized, but how the drug war has been used to justify trade regulation and to limit competition. Moreover, this trade limitation and differential application of drug law is militarily enforced throughout the region. (This is no longer the case in Bolivia, as Morales expelled the DEA in 2008.) The coca leaf case thus reveals the nexus between trade policy, the drug war and military enforcement of privilege.

Despite the fact that the War on Drugs has largely been seen as a human rights catastrophe that has the effect of pushing production to different regions, the US continues to not only back this policy, but hints at expanding it, apparently with disregard for any possible gray zone that is not in its economic interest. The question we need to ask is, “In whose name?” The Drug War has most definitely not stopped narcotics from reaching the US. It has cost many lives (28,000 in Mexico alone since 2006) and billions of tax payer dollars. If this is the case, who is it helping? At very least, if the US insists on pursuing free trade and the drug war, it should show some consistency and adhere to the principles of a game it has largely invented. Until rhetoric matches action, we should take every opportunity to challenge their claim to a moral high ground and point out places where practice actually maintains the old lines of discrimination.

Despite the  
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## **“New Age” Continued from Page 5**

especially Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales (without, however, mentioning or taking on the implications of “21st century socialism”). Together these figures were liberating the region from U. S. domination, foreign exploitation and from poverty.

Perkins’ shift from economic hit-man to educator about a holistic and shamanistic approach to global problems came in part from his decades-long experiences with indigenous cultures in Ecuador and elsewhere. He came to believe that a change of consciousness was the key to a peaceful, just and sustainable world. That change entailed the abandonment of an attitude of domination for one of harmony with the cosmos and connectedness with all being. Consciousness, not the material world, is the basic force in the universe; it links us to the divine. Like the shamans, we modern-day global citizens can implement a holistic vision by shifting attention to the world of the spirit. Through connecting to the life-force, we can attain personal, and then, world peace. We can retrieve the wisdom to alter our institutions, corporations above all. It is up to us as individuals and collectively to pressure corporations to put human needs and a sustainable environment before profits.

Perkins’ optimism about the possibilities of transformation within a capitalist context rests on three factors. First is the success that various organizations around the world have had in modifying corporate rapaciousness; second is the belief that the business ethics of the post-World War II era, which put the public good alongside profits as a desirable goal, can be revived; third and most important, is the idea that a kinder, gentler capitalism is within our grasp. The goal is not to end capitalism but to hold it to a higher standard. (When pressed, he said that he would be happy with an alternative to capitalism, but there was nothing out there. This dovetails with the common notion on the left that revolutionary and socialist ideas lack credibility.)

However, revolutionary and anti-capitalist ideas are alive and well in parts of Latin America, though they represent a break with the tradition of state socialism; they insist on participatory democracy and grassroots empowerment. A change of consciousness is not ignored, but it plays a very different role in Venezuela’s “twenty-first century socialism” or Bolivia’s communal, indigenous socialism than it does in the reformist vision of New Age spirituality in the US. Whereas for John Perkins, engaged Buddhists

and their ilk, a revolution in consciousness precedes any meaningful change in social arrangements, that is not the case for the Latin American left. Take the views of Marxist scholar and Chavez advisor, Marta Harnecker. Harnecker never says that consciousness comes first. (Nor, as a Marxist, could she.) But she does argue that it counts. New social institutions, such as communal councils and cooperatives cannot function properly if the old individualism, consumerism and state paternalism hold sway. A new culture of solidarity is needed. Culture and ideas matter. But not abstracted from a political context and a matrix of concrete material things.

Similarly to the Chavistas in Venezuela, the Sandinista revolutionaries of the 1980s were not satisfied with external changes. The liberation theology that inspired so many, and continues to do so, added a spiritual dimension to the political process. Christian principles guided many Nicaraguans’ efforts to liberate the poor and oppressed. But they recognized the structural obstacles to change: the neo-colonial capitalist order of Somoza had to be radically transformed. And the Sandinistas developed political and economic strategies to do this. It is this clarity about structures of domination and what needs to be changed if justice is to prevail that I find wanting in New Age thinking.

## **“Border Conflict” Continued from Page 4**

Inconvenient or not, the truth is otherwise. At any rate, the case is now before the World Court and Nicaragua has pledged to abide by its ruling.

I said that on one level the corporate media disinformation campaign was about the border controversy. On another level it is about the age-old effort to hobble Nicaraguan sovereignty and to deny its people the right to self determination. While the US government has mostly stayed out of the border conflict, it is very active in undermining Nicaragua’s electoral system.

The US did everything it could, short of restarting the contra war, to stop the Sandinistas from regaining office through the ballot box. That included spending more per Nicaraguan voter for Violeta Chamorro’s 1990 campaign than George H. W. Bush and Walter Mondale spent combined per US voter in 1988. It also included supporting – if not instigating – the fraudulent election of 1996.

Nicaragua’s 1990 election was the first success of the misnamed National Endowment for Democracy (NED). While the NED does not always succeed in

determining who wins, it always distorts the political process through its founding and funding of civil society groups, dividing popular movements, biased polls and poll watching.

One of the worst consequences of the US government's efforts to manipulate other countries' elections is that international election monitoring is now viewed with suspicion and outright hostility – and rightfully so. In the 1990s, election monitoring did some good at least in eliminating the grossest forms of fraud such as the military preventing people from voting.

But the US has taken advantage of the highly regarded practice of election monitoring to turn it into one more tool to interfere in the democratic processes of other countries. The most blatant example is the 2009 coup government-run election in Honduras. The usual international election monitors from the OAS, EU, and Carter Center all refused to monitor the illegitimate election. But the International Republican Institute, a core group of the NED, sent its own politically biased “monitors” who declared the election “free and fair” – and that became the official US position.

Nicaragua's Supreme Electoral Council

has announced that there will be no credentialed international or national election monitoring in the November 2011 election, although they will allow international “accompaniment.” We can expect to hear howls of criticism from Republican House leaders, State Department officials, and the corporate media. But really, what choice does Nicaragua have? International observers certified the election of 1990, bought and paid for by the US government. They certified the fraudulent 1996 election as well. President Ortega has said that Jimmy Carter told him he had to accept the fraudulent results to save the country from a new war.

And what about national election monitoring? The national monitors, Ethics and Transparency and IPADE are heavily funded by NED and USAID. How can their monitoring possibly be considered unbiased? The US does not allow either international or national election monitoring here. Fair elections are insured by poll watchers for the parties and candidates. Nicaragua has exactly that same system to guarantee the fairness of its own elections. We should defend Nicaragua's right to protect the integrity of its elections.

## AFGJ Upcoming Delegations

**Colombia** (May 27-June 5, 2011) Co-sponsored by AFGJ and the National Lawyers Guild, this delegation will focus on political prisoners and US-designed prisons. Application deadline: March 15. \$1400 covers all except international airfare. \$200 deposit required. For information contact: James Jordan at james@AfGJ.org or 202-544-9355 x3.

**Nicaragua** (June 19-27, 2011) Co-sponsored by AFGJ and Nicaragua Network, this delegation will investigate US intervention in elections for President and legislature this November. Optional two day extension to Honduras. Application deadline: April 19. \$975 covers all except international airfare. \$200 deposit required. For information contact: Katherine Hoyt at kathy@AFGJ.org or 202-544-9355 x2.

**Honduras** (June 27-July 5, 2011) Hosted by the National Front for Popular Resistance (FRNP), this delegation will provide accompaniment for peaceful demonstration on the second anniversary of the June 28, 2009 coup and will meet with unions, teachers and other groups of the resistance as well as travel to a land conflict community. Application deadline: May 8. \$800 covers all except international airfare. \$200 deposit required. For information contact: Chuck Kaufman at chuck@AFGJ.org or 202-544-9355 x1.

# News from Nicaragua

Dec. 18, 2010 - Feb. 15, 2011

**Editor's Note:** The News From Nicaragua is in a new format this issue. Rather than trying to compress the news of two months of topics from the weekly Nicaragua News Bulletin into a short column for the Global Justice Monitor, we are experimenting in this issue by linking the original News Bulletin articles so that you can read the full article on subjects that interest you. We want your feedback. It takes 8-10 hours of staff time to summarize the news in the way we did formerly. This version is the work of an hour or two. If we hear from our readers that the old way of presenting the news is important to you, we will invest the staff time to do it. If not, we will have extra time to organize to build a better world. Please address your comments about this or any subject related to making the Global Justice Monitor more useful to you to Jamie Way at [info@AFGJ.org](mailto:info@AFGJ.org).

## **Elections**

[Gadea likely to go with the PLI; Sandinistas hold local party congresses \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[Alliance between Fabio Gadea and ALN in doubt \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Callahan says Ortega will win elections if opposition does not unite \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Gadea to run on ALN ticket; new Cid-Gallup poll released \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[Aleman and Gadea meet; opposition fails to unite \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Catholic Church leaders continue to speak out on election issues \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Ortega gives "State of Nation" speech in Managua plaza, nixes electoral observation \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[Poll shows support for government social policies and Ortega's reelection \(Dec. 21\)](#)

## **Politics**

[Bill on violence against women raises furor \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[Debate begins on social security reform \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[YATAMA protests continue in Bilwi \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[National Assembly considering new law governing Directorate of Customs \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[El Nuevo Diario accuses Customs of holding newsprint because of corruption stories \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Nicaragua did not apply for U.S. Millennium Challenge](#)

[Fund monies \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Sandinistas and allies elected to Assembly leadership posts; opposition disunity continues \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Nicaraguan ambassador responds to Post editorial \(Jan. 4\)](#)

## **Border Conflict**

[Nicaragua publishes map with Harbor Head in Nicaragua; Google shows the same \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Costa Rica and Nicaragua meet in Cuernavaca under auspices of Mexico and Guatemala \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Costa Rica and Nicaragua present arguments before the World Court \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[World Court case on San Juan River opens; Nicaragua rejects Ramsar report \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Senator Richard Lugar takes Costa Rica's side in border dispute \(Dec. 21\)](#)

## **Education & Health**

[Program continues work of "Yes, I Can!" literacy campaign \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[World Bank lends US\\$19.5 million to Nicaragua to keep children in school \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Record numbers register for school; problems remain \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[Government guarantees school meals to students \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Needs of people with disabilities to be addressed using completed census \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[Disabled individuals demand a law enshrining their rights \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[City of Managua to buy medicines for former sugar cane workers \(Feb. 15\)](#)

## **Economic & Human Rights**

[Municipality of Cardenas to get potable water from Lake Nicaragua \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[Over 161,000 acres reforested in four years of Sandinista government \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[From turtle egg hunters to conservationists \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Labor rights improve under Ortega government \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Animal rights law goes into effect in February \(Jan. 25\)](#)

[Senior citizens demonstrate for expanded social security \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[LGBT community meets with human rights ombudsperson \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[One hundred families to move from buildings damaged in 1972 quake into new homes \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[Housing now ready for ex-banana workers affected by pesticides \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Zero Hunger federation will mean more access to training and credit for women \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Four hundred houses completed for flood victims \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Program Love attends to 15,000 children \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Mestizo peasant farmers demand land titles in the RAAN \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Zero Hunger meets its goals \(Dec. 21\)](#)

### **Economy**

[Gold fever grips investors in Nicaragua \(Feb. 8\)](#)

[New strains of seeds to improve basic grain production \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[Tamarin hydroelectric dam construction to start in March \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[Government working on microfinance bill \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[Coffee growers earn more while protecting the](#)

[environment \(Feb. 1\)](#)

[Deep water port at Monkey Point in doubt \(Jan. 18\)](#)

[Garment factory to reopen in Ciudad Sandino \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[Cigar industry employs 20,000 in Esteli \(Jan. 11\)](#)

[New process eliminates need for mercury in artisan gold mining \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Bank of Production reports on first eight months \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Nicaragua closes 2010 with mostly good economic news \(Dec. 21\)](#)

### **Miscellaneous**

[International Poetry Festival begins in Granada honoring Claribel Alegria \(Feb. 15\)](#)

[Nicaraguans celebrate Christmas and New Years \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[Nicaragua prepares for the holidays \(Dec. 21\)](#)

[Granada judges free nine drug traffickers \(Jan. 4\)](#)

[US Ambassador announces joint naval operations \(Dec. 21\)](#)

[Managua to restrict housing near the lake \(Dec. 21\)](#)

[Government closes B2Gold's Santa Pancha mine after collapse \(Dec. 21\)](#)

The Global Justice Monitor is published by the Alliance for Global Justice to educate U.S. citizens about the effects of US policy on the people of Latin America and to build ties of peace and friendship between our two peoples. This publication was formerly the Nicaragua Monitor. If you are interested in contributing articles to this publication or have comments, please contact the editor at the email address listed below.

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