



# WHY THIS ISSUE?

One village in Salvador is bombed by its air force while in another village the army is passing out food and medicine. Both the bombs and the food are provided by the the U.S. In Nicaragua the contra war is over but U.S. intervention continues through heavy funding of one of the political parties in the elections. In Bolivia U.S. drug enforcement agents patrol jungles with Bolivian military. Missouri National Guard troops are building roads in Honduras. Cuba has been under a U.S. economic embargo for more than twenty-five years. In Panama U.S. military and State Department officials are posted to each ministry of their government as "advisors."

Similar examples of U.S. political, economic, military and paramilitary interventions could be provided from our recent history with Angola, the Philippines, Mexico, and many other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our government and press tell us of economic development, free and fair elections, stability and "winning hearts and minds." Churches and human rights organizations tell of torture, bombings, starvation, rape, and assassination. U.S. citizens are alternately confused, angered, or paralyzed by a sense of powerlessness.

When Jesus sent the disciples out to cast out demons and preach the good news to the world he warned them to be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves." We, too, must strive to be wise in our attempts to oppose evil if we are to have any hope of sustaining some innocence in the face of it. Prayer and fasting are crucial, and so is searching analysis of our reality from many points of view.

All of the diverse and confusing and painful events listed above fall into a clear and meaningful pattern from the point of view of those responsible for U.S. policy. Each is an application of a what policymakers refer to as "low-intensity conflict." These are not random events, they are the results of a deliberate and articulate and complex policy. I find that very empowering. We do not have to oppose 100 separate events, but one unified policy — and we have 100 opportunities to do so.

Our hope in this issue is to provide enough information on what low intensity conflict is to empower us to oppose it actively and effectively. For starters, as the military strategists themselves admit, it is not a low intensity conflict for those who experience it. A more apt name is "low-visibility conflict." We go a long way toward defeating this tactic merely by making it public and visible. Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer exposes the fundamentals of LIC and reflects on its meaning as an applied theology. Donna Vukelich explores what LIC looks like when its full range of strategies are applied in one conflict — Nicaragua. John Swomley gives a sense of the breadth of the policy by surveying some of its applications over the past ten years. Margaret Phillips provides groundbreaking work in showing the connections between LIC and the "drug war" in our cities. Genevieve Cassani, SSND, designed the front cover. It is inspired by a metaphor by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer: "Neatly packaged for public consumption, low-intensity conflict is like a deadly bomb wrapped with beautiful paper."

We very much regret that in one issue we cannot also explore how people in the U.S. and abroad have developed exciting ways to confront "low intensity conflict," and the applied theology that these communities live in response to it. Surely in the coming years this will become a very fruitful dialogue as the peoples of the Third World accompany and teach us in our struggles to live the reign of God on earth. ✚

-Virginia Druhe

*Cover graphic for  
The Round Table  
by Genevieve Cassani, SSND*

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# "LOW-INTENSITY CONFLICT" AND THE CRISIS OF FAITH

by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer

"Low-intensity conflict" causes high intensity pain. It is a sophisticated, flexible and totalitarian strategy of warfare. It is used, in the words of General Maxwell Taylor, by "the leading 'have' power" in its fight "to protect our national valuables against envious 'have-nots.'" The U.S. war against the poor relies upon a flexible array of weapons. It integrates economic, psychological, diplomatic-political, and military aspects of warfare into a comprehensive whole. It includes destroying countries, or in the words of former CIA director, William Casey, "wasting" a country such as Nicaragua as part of a destabilization effort; it actively targets progressive churches and liberation theology for persecution; it withholds or doles out economic aid to punish or reward governments depending on their willingness to "protect our national valuables"; it actively seeks to further reduce the meager consumption of the poor; it contracts the services of international drug runners and illegal arms merchants; it defines the U.S. people as enemy and targets us for disinformation campaigns; it capitalizes on and cultivates our racism, believing that we will tolerate nearly any atrocity, including the brutal murder of Jesuit priests, as long as few U.S. soldiers die in defense of "our national valuables."

In my book, War against The Poor: Low-Intensity Conflict and Christian Faith, I argue that the U.S. war against the poor is so insidious, so much in conflict with authentic democracy and Christian faith that it requires Christians to take bold action. U.S. low-intensity conflict strategies so broad in scope, so cynical in outlook, so damaging in practice that it presents Christians and churches in the United States with a historical

challenge similar to that faced by the Confessing churches in Nazi Germany. It would be difficult to imagine a worldview and strategy of warfare more in conflict with the best aspects of our biblical tradition:

- "Low-intensity conflict" strategy defines the poor as enemy. The biblical God empowers the poor, defends their interests and works on behalf of their liberation.

- The worldview which shapes "low-intensity conflict" strategy is based on the belief that peace is an illusion. The United States is and always will be under attack by hostile forces. The biblical God calls us to be peacemakers. God's will for the human family is shalom, the spiritual and economic health of individuals, families, communities and nations.

- "Low-intensity conflict" strategy sets out to maintain economic inequalities and injustice through the exercise of sophisticated power. The biblical God condemns injustice. Hunger, poverty and social inequality are signs of a spiritual crisis, evidence of idolatry. We are called to conversion. Our security is linked to shalom. Our power is paradoxically linked to a cross.

- "Low-intensity conflict" seeks to maintain unjust privileges and to defend elite interests at any cost. The biblical God defends the poor and calls the rich to conversion. Social structures are judged according to a criterion of justice. In the kingdom, debts are forgiven, land is redistributed and the unrepentant rich are sent away empty.

- "Low-intensity conflict" strategy inflicts suffering for political purposes. Others must suffer in order for us to maintain our privileges. Imposing suffering through the management of terror is a central fea-

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*"Our crisis of faith in light of 'low-intensity conflict' strategy cannot be overstated. We are Christians living in an empire that is determined to maintain its privileges through an aggressive war against the poor."*

ture of "low-intensity conflict." In El Salvador, terror and intimidation is determined by the strength of the popular organizations. In Nicaragua, the CIA produced a manual for the contras on how to maximize the psychological effect of terrorizing civilians. Causing \$17 billion of damage to Nicaragua's economy was part of a U.S. pre-electoral strategy in that country. Paul's New Testament image is that we are part of one body; whenever one member of the body suffers, we all suffer. It is an image of solidarity. The biblical God condemns the suffering of the poor which is so often the product of the greed and injustice of the rich. We are called, as followers of Jesus' way, to redemptive suffering, that is, to be willing to be persecuted on behalf of the truth, to be faithful without fear of reprisals.

- Finally, "low-intensity conflict" is totalitarian-like. It seeks to control the hearts and minds, political and economic destinies of individuals and nations. This goal of conformity to the desires of empire sharply conflicts with the radical freedom we experience in Christ, a freedom on which our ability to be leaven in the world depends.

Christians in many parts of the so-called Third World are naming our present historical moment as a time of "kairos." Kairos is a Greek word which means decisive time. A "kairos" time is a moment of truth for people of faith. It is a time in which decisions made through action or inaction have profound religious and political significance. In South Africa, Christians who were alarmed by Church complicity with, support for, or inadequate resistance to apartheid produced *The*

*Kairos Document*. In Central America, where U.S. "low-intensity conflict" strategy is responsible for unspeakable suffering, progressive Christians made an appeal to the churches of the world in *Kairos Central America*. This was followed by *The Road to Damascus*, a collective reflection on the present crisis and opportunity of faith by Christians from a variety of Third World countries.

Each of these documents make it clear that social injustice is often possible because of church complicity or because of the active involvement of Christians. "Kairos" marks a crisis and opportunity of faith in which God's spirit is calling us and leading us into faithful action. For Christians living in the United States the cumulative message of these kairos documents is painfully clear: the suffering of our brothers and sisters throughout much of the Third World is directly tied to our unfaithfulness. Their struggle for liberation is made infinitely more difficult because of U.S. foreign policy (they specifically name "low-intensity conflict") and an unjust international economy of which the U.S. is a leading actor. Recognizing their own crisis of faith in light of church complicity with forces of injustice, they also call us to conversion. They appeal to us to recognize our kairos, our moment of truth, our crisis and opportunity of faith which arises because of the subservience of churches and people of faith to the dominant U.S. culture.

Our crisis of faith in light of "low-intensity conflict" strategy cannot be overstated. We are Christians living in an empire that is determined to maintain

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its privileges through an aggressive war against the poor. As Christians living in the United States, we have often embraced imperial myths. We have accepted almost without question that capitalism is good, socialism is evil, flags belong in churches, the U.S. press is free and objective, widespread discrepancies between rich and poor are inevitable and somehow compatible with Christian faith. U.S. foreign policies well-intentioned, the exploitation of third-world peoples is unrelated to our economic privileges, and our democracy is exemplary, safe and secure.

Our assimilation into empire has distorted our faith and left us subservient to a dominant ideology and culture. Our kairos or call to conversion leads to a confrontation with the empire and with the gods it calls on for legitimacy. Our kairos, that is, our crisis and opportunity of faith, centers on five significant issues.

First, we must be clear about ultimate allegiances. Despite verbal claims otherwise, it is wealth, power, nationalism and not Jesus Christ that serve as lords of our lives. We must free ourselves from the clutches of the dominant culture and for the gospel through creative actions such as tax resistance, refusal or withdrawal from military service or employment, removal of flags from our churches, and distinctive lifestyles which reflect a concern for justice and the integrity of creation.

Second, we must seek to heal and build relationships of mutual trust and respect within the framework of a unified body of Christ. Solidarity with the persecuted churches in El Salvador is one example of how faith calls us to transcend nationalism and national boundaries. Our faith leaves no room for any kind of ultimate commitment to a nation state.

Third, a critical component of our faith crisis is our idolatrous relationship with things. "Low-intensity conflict" sets out to defend "our national valuables against envious have nots." There is a relationship between our relative affluence and our willingness to accept imperial myths and to ignore or be indifferent to U.S. foreign and domestic policies which victimize the poor. Alternative, sufficiency lifestyles, while not in themselves a panacea, are an important component of responding to our kairos.

Fourth, kairos requires that we dream dreams, envision alternative futures, and embody hope. Our subservience to the dominant culture has in many ways eroded our capacity for authentic hope. There are alternatives to affluence at the expense of the poor, to fortress America, and to the drift away from democracy to tyranny. As Christians, we need to cultivate a spirituality deep enough to unleash our capacity to envision and to begin making those alternatives a reality.

Finally, our kairos time requires that we make overcoming oppression that top priority in our lives. Jon Sobrino, a jesuit priest from El Salvador who was out of the country when his fellow priests were murdered, said recently: "You cannot be a believer in God today in this world if you do not take oppression seriously...What is at stake here is faith and humanity...I don't know how you can be a human being on this planet today if this growing oppression and poverty is not your central issue." As Christians living in the United States, what is at stake in our confrontation with "low-intensity conflict" is the very essence and integrity of our faith and our claim to be human beings.



(Note: Throughout the United States, small groups are gathering to reflect on the significance of the Third World kairos documents and the meaning of kairos for Christians in the United States. This reflection on kairos is particularly important as 1992 approaches in which 500 years of colonialism will be celebrated. If you can form a small group and are interested in being part of a national discernment effort on Kairos/1992, contact: Committee of Correspondence, 2021 28th Ave. S, Minneapolis, MN, 55406.)

# TOTAL WAR

by John Swomley

The term "low-intensity conflict" is distinguished from high intensity conflict such as World War II, and medium intensity conflict, such as the war between Iran and Iraq. "Low intensity" is misleading, because it is not a low level of violence, but, according to Col. John Waghelstein, "is total war at the grassroots level." It combines political, economic, social, and psychological warfare with covert or other military actions, in an effort to destroy the enemy's social and political structures. In the process thousands or hundreds of thousands of people may be killed.

Low-intensity conflict (LIC) is the birth of a new strategy for American imperialism in that it is directed at Third World countries rather than major European or Asian powers. The U.S. waged LIC against a Soviet client state, Afghanistan, both before and after the Cold War ended. The rationale at one time was to force it out of the Soviet sphere of influence, whereas today it is also to incorporate it in the U.S. sphere. LIC is being used in Central America and various parts of South America, Africa, and Asia, with variances according to regional strategies.

LIC emphasizes the use of terrorism and surrogate troops such as the contra in Nicaragua, and Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan who have been supplied and "supervised" by a coordinated combination of U.S. agencies, including the CIA, the State Department, the National Security Agency, the Agency for International Development (AID), and others.

The purpose of LIC is usually to target and control populations, rather than to take possession of territory. In Nicaragua, for example, the contra destroyed farms, health centers, schools, and village coop-

eratives in an effort to destroy the morale of the people, but rarely attacked the Sandinista army. The U.S. used psychological warfare in various forms against Nicaragua. One illustration is the large-scale U.S. troop maneuvers in Honduras, which seemed to threaten invasion. This led to the draft in Nicaragua, and U.S. encouragement of resistance to the draft by internal right-wing forces, with the support of Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the major anti-draft leader.

LIC is not limited warfare, but is total and permanent. It uses any target and employs torture, abuse, including rape (as evident in Nicaragua), as well as destroying the nation's infrastructure. In Nicaragua, the CIA-led contra destroyed 65 health clinics and forced 5,000 health-care workers into the militia. The intent was to reduce social programs and hence the good will of the people toward the Sandinistas. Americans are surprised and angry when death squads in El Salvador kill Jesuits. There were numerous others killed that same week, but their deaths received no publicity. Such deaths are not accidental or done without CIA or U.S. military general knowledge. This is an integral aspect of LIC, which will not be stopped or restrained when anyone stands in the way of U.S. control in El Salvador or elsewhere. Readers may remember the subsequently revealed plot to kill the U.S. Ambassador to Costa Rica, in order to blame it on the Sandinistas.

LIC also uses economic warfare, as evident in the embargo against Nicaragua, Cuba, and Panama, the freezing of assets as in Panama, and the withholding of disaster relief to Nicaragua after a devastating hurricane. It also promises aid to a new replacement government if the "enemy" government is eliminated. Insofar

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as possible, it provides economic assistance to its surrogate troops, such as the contra, to construct in areas they control an alternative social system along lines acceptable to or exploitable by U.S. interests.

Inside Nicaragua the U.S. built an alternative social structure under Sandinista eyes which enabled the U.S. to control the elections of 1990 and its outcome. The U.S. organized a coalition of fourteen parties (UNO, or National Opposition Union) which opposed the Sandinistas, picked the presidential candidate, Violeta Chamorro, planned the election strategy, and financed it with a Congressional grant of \$12.5 million to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), set up as a quasi-public body. The CIA funneled at least an additional five million to the coalition.

Additional funds provided by AID and the U.S. Information Agency were used to provide printing equipment, a special color lab for campaign literature, salaries of visiting journalists for the opposition newspaper, *La Prensa*, and to install inside Nicaragua "Radio Democracia" to promote UNO. All of this was a less obvious aspect of the continuing warfare led by the CIA-led contra.

A 1988 report of the Department of Defense's blue-ribbon Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy outlined the scope of coordinated special assistance to make LIC work: "The U.S. will need not just Defense Department personnel and material, but diplomats and information specialists, agricultural chemists, bankers and economists, hydrologists, criminologists, meteorologists, and scores of other professionals." In fact, the Reagan-Bush administration with bi-partisan Congressional support established a permanent U.S. presence in Nicaragua with lines of vertical command and target constituencies, chiefly business, labor, the media, youth, and women.

The American Federation of Labor operated a right-wing "Free Trade Union Institute" to influence labor unions in Nicaragua and elsewhere to support

U.S. imperial policies and to mobilize workers to vote properly in the election. Religious groups, including Catholics, Protestant fundamentalists, and the right wing Institute for Religion and Democracy, played a role in opposing the Sandinistas.

In Panama the CIA tried to buy and supervise the so-called "free election" in May 1989, and was thwarted by Noriega, who rejected its results.

LIC includes a carefully orchestrated effort to use organized groups that support American nationalism to promote American imperialism overseas, often under the guise of anti-Communism or one of its replacement motivations, narcotics interdiction. Anti-Communism has always been a cover for defense of U.S. interests overseas and for expanding the American empire. Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, referring to the growing threat from social and political disorders in the Third World, wrote in early 1988 that this unrest "has become an increasing threat to our interests as well as those of our allies and friends." Although not as great a threat as a Soviet attack, he added, this form of low intensity conflict will "represent the principal form of conflict in the world today and will remain so in the foreseeable future."

LIC is not simply a strategy of right-wing Republican politicians or military personnel. A Democratic Congress in 1986 created the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, as well as a National Security Council

*"The purpose of LIC is usually to target and control populations ...LIC is not limited warfare, but is total and permanent."*

Board for Low-Intensity Conflict. Gorbachev's new policies and the end of the Cold War have not nullified this, but made it more possible for the CIA, the Pentagon, Congress and other agencies to regard the Third World rather than Europe as the primary arena for future conflict and war.

An important aspect of LIC is what are called Rapid Deployment Forces, Green Berets, SEAL teams, Delta forces, and Light Infantry Divisions such as were used in Panama and Grenada. The 1988 budget for these was \$25 billion. The U.S. Special Operations Command at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida covers 34,000 special operations forces, some of which are active duty military and National Guard and Reserve forces, plus 25,000 additional trained forces. Fort Bragg in North Carolina

is another important center for special operations, and is also the base for the Army's Psychological Warfare section.

In Panama the key elements of LIC were economic warfare; the presence of U.S. troops in the Canal Zone; U.S. cooperation with the business community, some of whose leaders were installed as the new puppet government; and an invasion by special forces. The invasion was marked by psychological warfare against the American people who, unlike virtually every Latin American nation and most others around the world, believed the propaganda rationale for the invasion. In the Organization of American States the vote was 20 to 1 against the invasion. The U.S. was the lone vote. Following the invasion, U.S. officers were installed in every government ministry to help run the government, opposition elements were imprisoned or kept in "refugee" camps, and the U.S. press lost all interest in the reinstallation of U.S. imperial control.

The April 2nd New Yorker described the continuing conflict in Panama, several months after the invasion: "American and Panamanian forces have openly raided newspaper offices and union halls and rounded up hundreds of dissidents — among them a prominent newspaper publisher who wrote a column criticizing the invasion, and the law professor who negotiated the 1977 Canal Treaties on behalf of the Panamanians — and many of these people have been detained without charge at United States military bases or held in jails for 'impeding the renewal of the powers of state'."

LIC, of course, is not used only against an overseas enemy. Psychological warfare is also directed at the American people, who must be misled with the willing cooperation of sections of the press and media. One of the words coined for this is "disinformation." There are of course numerous other techniques which include the demonization of leaders of Third World countries that will not do Washington's bidding. Chief among these have been Noriega, Khadaffi, Maurice Bishop in Grenada, and Castro. The United States maintains a list of enemies such as Libya, Angola, Cuba,

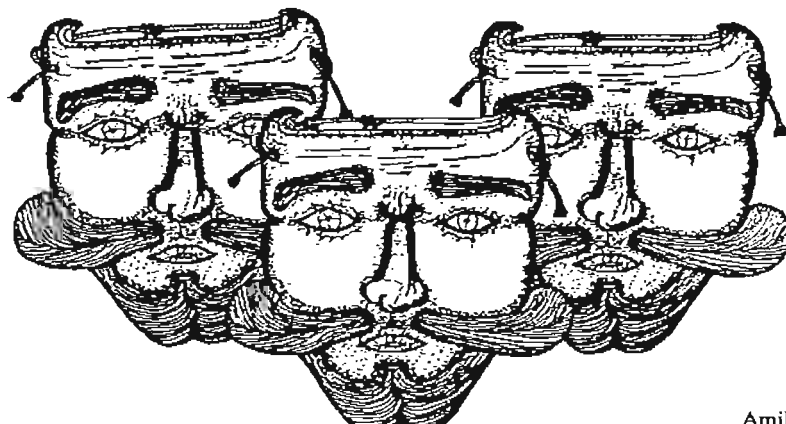
whose leaders and systems and people are targets of present and future LIC, as well as lists of American organizations who are treated with hostility, kept under surveillance and investigated.

This article cannot be concluded without special mention of other governments and organizations who always or usually cooperate with the forces in Washington that direct low intensity conflict. Chief among these are the Tory government in England currently led by Margaret Thatcher, the Israelis, the World Anti-Communist League which includes key figures such as Generals Singlaub and Secord and the Rev. Sun Myong Moon, who has organized numerous front groups for his Unification Church, including CAUSA, which operates effectively among certain religious groups in the U.S. and Latin America in support of U.S. policies.

Israel deserves special mention, as its intelligence and other forces located throughout Central America and other Third World countries function virtually as an alter-ego of U.S. interests and do much of the "dirty work" that the U.S. prefers to have handled by others, such as helping South Africa in counter-insurgency warfare training against black nationalists.

The American people are not only largely uninformed about LIC, but are easily swayed to oppose new Washington enemies, such as "drug lords" in Latin America, and Arab nationalists who threaten Western oil interests. These justify the use of LIC there, just as the demonization of leaders in Libya, Cuba and other countries justify U.S. action against their people.

Until the National Security State and its various agencies which dominate the U.S. government are disarmed, the U.S. will be in permanent war against the Third World. Such disarmament requires the demilitarizing of the minds and spirit of the American people, which in turn involves a major educational campaign. That campaign has yet to be organized; perhaps it may be begun in the near future. If Gorbachev could accomplish wonders with unilateral initiatives, why can we not think in terms of the unilateral disarmament of the CIA, including low-intensity conflict? †



DOMESTIC LIC:

# CONTROLLING HEARTS AND MINDS

by Margaret B. Phillips

Marines landing on the shores of New York and Los Angeles. Green Berets storming through the jungles of inner-city St. Louis and Chicago and Detroit.

A bit farfetched, perhaps, at least so far. But militaristic sweeps of north St. Louis have begun, according to Pam Talley of the St. Louis chapter of the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. She describes a dragnet carried out last fall in a three or four block area of the north side's First Ward under the city's "Operation Impact" drug crackdown. It terrorized residents, but not one drug house was found. Police, fire inspectors, rat patrol, anyone who could issue citations went door-to-door; roadblocks were set up. Talley and others who witnessed it were horrified and linked it to the recent consolidation of police districts into new superstations — a move which struck her and others as militaristic. Talley suspects it was a test to see what the African American community would tolerate; fortunately there was a great deal of outcry. Reports of torture techniques elsewhere have surfaced, she says.

The language of war has been used in the "War on Drugs" in rapid escalation, intensifying the attack-and-punish mentality, with the inflamed generalizations and scapegoating characteristic of wartime, as Ralph Brauer (*Semantic Escalation: The Drug War of Words*, The Nation, May 21, 1990) observes, with the inevitable result of "the dehumanization of the enemy."

Since President Bush, Drug Czar Bennett, and countless others have assigned the blame to "everyone who uses drugs, everyone who sells drugs and everyone who looks the other way," a sweeping characterization, "this leads to a rather loose definition of enemy territory: Crack dealers become crack neighborhoods become the inner city." Terms like "battleground," "front

lines," "fight this war," and "massive interdiction" are commonplace.

Many commentators have noticed the failure of the so-called "War on Drugs." Not just habitual critics of those in power, but also judges, bar associations, Forbes magazine, even high officials of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), have expressed skepticism about the military and law enforcement ("supply side") approach to drug abuse. Prisons and jails are overflowing, court dockets are crammed, drugs keep coming in. The failure is so resounding that we can only conclude, with a growing number of commentators, that their real purpose is something other than stopping drug abuse and the human destruction which accompanies it. Edward S. Herman has suggested that avoiding the root causes of the problem is necessary for the Bush/Reagan administrations, since their policies have fueled the drug problem and they cannot acknowledge any approach other than a military one abroad and a continued assault on the "interclass" in the way of reduced services and benefits.

A look at global politics is illuminating. Opponents of U.S. policy in Latin America have analyzed just what the U.S. is really attempting to do in other parts of the world through the technique of low-intensity conflict (LIC). Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer has summarized LIC in the third world as "a U.S. global war against the poor designed to manage social change in ways that protect perceived U.S. interests while maintaining, at least for its own people, the image of democratic ideals." In this effort, several principles are invoked, many of which are relevant to domestic policy as well. These include, among others, the need to control hearts and minds, not just territory; making use of terror to create a climate of

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*"If only it were all so simple!  
If only there were evil people somewhere  
insidiously committing evil deeds  
and it were necessary only to separate them  
from the rest of us and destroy them.  
But the dividing line between good and evil  
cuts through the heart of every human being,  
and who is willing  
to destroy a piece of his own heart?"*

Alexander Solzhenitsyn  
*The Gulag Archipelago*



fear as a deterrence; the need to redefine victory (in Vietnam, where the U.S. lost the war in any conventional military calculus, we "won" by destroying the economy, allowing the U.S. to blame "socialism" for Vietnam's failures); and domestic disinformation to hide from the U.S. public the cost in human suffering of U.S. policy. Elsewhere, "low-intensity conflict integrates economic, psychological, diplomatic, and military aspects of warfare into a comprehensive strategy to protect 'U.S. valuables' against the needs and demands of the poor." Among other tactics, it "defines the poor as the enemy."

But is LIC used against Americans? Let's examine those principles.

1. Control hearts and minds. By aiming at very real fears and appearing to offer solutions, the administration appeals to hysteria and fear of drugs and crime. Hysterical is not too strong a word for the Bush admini-

stration's language on drug use. President Bush's introduction to the National Drug Control Strategy (the so-called Bennett Plan) in its September 1989 incarnation referred to "epidemic uses" of the "scourge of drugs." In the January 1990 version, President Bush upgraded it to the "threat drugs pose to American public health has never been greater," while in January 1990 the Plan adds that "our drug problem is getting worse, not better." Like the cynical use of Willie Horton in the 1988 campaign, "drugs" has become a code word conjuring up images of crazed drug fiends dying in alleys or killing wantonly and seducing innocents in the mad rush to enslave the entire population to crack.

2. Use of terror to create a climate of fear as deterrence: emphasis on law enforcement. The extent to which legitimate fears of the very real crime problem caused by drug dealing in at-risk neighborhoods has resulted in curtailing of civil rights of youths in those neighborhoods in Los Angeles is portrayed by Mike Davis ("Los Angeles: Civil Liberties Between the Hammer and the Rock", *New Left Review*, July-August 1988, 170). The decrease in legitimate job opportunities for Hispanic and African American youths has made drug dealing the only way to realize the American dream, through the only social structure youths there know, gangs. The predictable result is police over-reliance on arrest and punishment and what Davis charges is "a conscious policy of social disinvestment" and the "tacit expendability of Black and brown youth" in Los Angeles. The extent to which this police attempt to curb drugs quickly turns into brutalization of youths of color is described by Earl Shorris ("Sanctuary for L.A. Homeboys: The Priest Who Loves Gangsters", *The Nation*, December 18, 1989) in a series of conversations with Hispanic youths who describe the harassment and beatings by the police as part of Operation Hammer. A Jesuit who has become a father figure to many of the youths arranged a meeting for the boys to tell Shorris their stories — a series of beatings, petty harassments, constant humiliation. Police crackdowns are being touted nationally as a deterrent.

3. Redefine victory. Here's where it gets really interesting. In the short term, large body counts in Vietnam, large hauls of drugs and numbers of arrests in the drug war, are called winning. In the longer view, just as the hardships in Nicaragua caused by U.S. economic sanctions and by U.S.-funded contra activity were doubtless a factor in the defeat of Daniel Ortega in the Nicaraguan elections, allowing all sorts of smug crowing from Washington, so U.S. drug policy serves to get the American public to see the problem as those people, generally darker-skinned, who do not share "our" values and who are poor and live in deplorable environments. The majority of drug users in absolute numbers

are white (estimates range from two-thirds to 80%), but the overwhelming majority who end up in jail or prison are non-white. One Manhattan judge found that law enforcement tactics of the DEA were aimed almost exclusively at members of racial minorities. Overly-broad application of law enforcement, such as picking up all males in the area after a bust, or eviction of family members from public housing after an arrest, affect the poor disproportionately. Recent news accounts across the country suggest a growing dismay at the extent to which non-white communities are targeted in a "war on black peoples" (in the words of the Los Angeles Times). These tactics justify the perverted Calvinism which assumes that wealth proves virtue, since the poor are coming more and more to be seen as the causes, not victims, of the problem. Thus "kleptocratic capitalism" (in Martin Kilson's phrase, in a different context) claims victory.

4. Domestic disinformation. Recent administrations have been willing to lie in order to add to the hysteria they want to foster, as "Contragates" and the now-familiar story of the staged purchase of crack last September across from the White House show. This shabby attempt to manipulate public opinion is symptomatic of an across-the-board willingness to ignore inconvenient facts, such as statistics which reveal that overall drug use may actually have been declining, not increasing, in recent years, or that far more damage is done by alcohol and nicotine than by cocaine and heroin. Politicians who acknowledge in private the shortcomings of the hardline approach vote for punishment of users while cutting treatment funds and ignoring joblessness, because that seems the safest way to re-election.

Conclusion. In global LIC the original element of war is the military, which the United States has had no qualms in using. Subtler forms of warfare are the new twist. Domestically, traditionally the military proper has had nothing to do directly with law enforcement, but the blurring of the definition of "enemy", the heating up of war vocabulary for what is essentially a health and social problem, makes all the more chilling a reference in the staid pages of the January 1990 Annual Report to the President of the United States, by Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense. In discussing Counternarcotics Programs, Cheney described one role for the military as helping federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies "with training, reconnaissance, command and control,



"Among other tactics, 'it defines the poor as enemy.'"

planning, and logistics." In addition to this indirect sort of support there is to be direct assistance of personnel and equipment sometimes (emphasis added).

Thus LIC comes to the streets of inner-city U.S.A. Its main domestic components are psychological and economic rather than conventionally military, but the implications are chilling: the "enemy" are now our own poor, particularly non-white. And this conclusion seems obvious, even old hat, to activists like Talley who have watched it develop. ✦





MEMBERING GUILLEN:  
INFORMATIONS TO EXPLAIN THE DEATH OF A CHILD

*He died of walking across, barefoot and alone,  
a long sadness,  
died of supporting centuries of hunger and cold,  
died of not having dreams painted with crayons,  
died never knowing a smile  
nor the brevity of Sundays  
nor that which hides beneath a circus tent.*

*He died, also, of unequal interchange —  
of imperialism,  
of blockade,  
of dollar financing of death,  
of complacent congressmen  
approving horror budgets —  
died of all that which to you may seem a pamphlet,  
but, as you can see, it kills.*

*This child died of dehydration  
(or malnutrition, if you prefer),  
but died of something more  
than there is room for on a death certificate,  
or in a story,  
or in a lament.*

*This child also died of you and of me  
who tangle our feet in papers and speeches  
when we should run to stab his death with a dagger.*

*Now that he is out of our hands,  
like a marvelous and tiny insect  
who escapes irrecoverably,  
help me to redesign the world,  
because the death of one child  
is a condition  
terribly sufficient  
and urgently necessary  
to redesign the world.*

By Mariana Yonuscg  
Nicaragua

# NICARAGUA: THE U.S. WAR GOES ON

by Donna Vukelich

The real victory in Nicaragua on February 25th belonged to the United States government as it won an important battle in its ongoing war against that country. That war - the strategy of so-called "low intensity conflict" - is far from over, but as it enters a new phase, it's useful to take a look back and also make some speculations for the future.

There has been a tremendous amount of debate within the U.S. solidarity movement about low intensity conflict - whether or not it is really any different from earlier counterinsurgency wars, for instance the U.S. war against Vietnam. Many people have argued that to call the war in Nicaragua "low intensity" greatly diminishes at least in semantic terms, the actual impact that the war has had on the Nicaraguan population.

One of the key differences between the "traditional" counterinsurgency wars and low-intensity conflict is the way the wars are packaged and marketed - to the U.S. population. There's a far more deliberate and conscious element of ideological warfare directed against the people of the United States, precisely to overcome what is referred to in U.S. military circles as the "Vietnam syndrome."

## The Military War

As the Pentagon states it, low intensity conflict must avoid, whenever possible, the use of U.S. troops in military actions against other countries. That leaves the U.S. with two options. One is to arm a "friendly" army to the teeth, and provide it with logistical support, advice and training - everything but the actual troops. That has been the U.S. policy in El Salvador in the 1980s. The other option is to create a proxy force - the counter-

revolutionaries in Nicaragua.

In the early years of the war, the contra forces had several military goals. One was to try and take a key area of Nicaraguan territory (Jalapa-Teotecacinte), and hold that territory, thus creating a divided Nicaragua. The contra forces could then have claimed themselves to be the "true" Nicaragua and greatly complicate matters for the Managua government. Another key goal was to provoke the Sandinista army - until 1983 still a volunteer army and functioning primarily in large bulky units - into massive incursions into Honduras. Since the war began as a "secret" war, if the contras had been successful in provoking the EPS into large troop movements over the border, Honduras - not the contra forces - could have gone to the international community and claimed they were being attacked by the Nicaraguans.

Neither of those scenarios was realized. The contras were never able to take or hold a town in Nicaragua, much less a sizeable piece of Nicaraguan territory. And, in general, the Sandinista army showed a good deal of caution and restraint in terms of troop movements into Honduras.

So, in one sense, the key military objectives of the contra forces were never realized. Much of the U.S. solidarity and peace movement in the U.S. focused their work for many years on trying to stop a possible invasion of Nicaragua by U.S. troops. Nicaragua also devoted tremendous efforts to preparing for a U.S. invasion, and the Nicaraguans effectively made the price of a U.S. invasion too high - by arming thousands of Nicaraguans who knew the territory well and were willing to fight, and die, for their country. But the flip side of that is that by making the cost of a U.S. invasion - in economic, political and human terms - very high for

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the United States, Nicaraguans paid a tremendous price at home. Nicaragua was essentially forced by U.S. policy to carry out a shift from social programs - the base of the revolutionary strategy in both the urban areas and the countryside - to defense spending. In 1980 about 12% of the national budget went to defense. By 1988 that figure had soared to 62%. It was a disastrous shift for Nicaragua.

### The Diplomatic War

The history of U.S. political and diplomatic pressure against Nicaragua is very long indeed, and so this article will discuss only the U.S. role in blocking the Latin and Central American peace initiatives. As the situation in Central America worsened in the early 1980s, four Latin America countries - Venezuela, Panama, Colombia and Mexico - came together in the

With Contadora stalemated, the Central American foreign ministers spent most of 1986 and 1987 drafting their own peace plan, known as the Esquipulas peace plan in the region, but often referred to in the U.S. as the "Arias plan" for Costa Rican president Oscar Arias. That plan was signed by all five Central American presidents on August 7, 1987, and called for broad democratization measures within each country as well as an end to foreign military assistance and support for armies or insurgencies - a measure that would have signaled the end of the contra forces had it been complied with. Nicaragua made the most steps forward in compliance with Esquipulas - broadening an already existing amnesty plan for armed contras, beginning a national dialogue and so forth. The other countries, however, dragged their feet and Honduras made little effort to push the contra forces out of their country.



*"...in Chile, Henry Kissinger commented that he wanted 'to make the economy scream.'"*

Contadora group. Contadora's aim was to seek a political solution to the conflicts in Central America that were threatening to rip the region apart.

One of Contadora's key premises was that a problem in any of the Central American countries was by nature a regional problem and thus demanded a regional solution. That directly challenged the U.S. line that any problem in Central America could be laid at Nicaragua's doorstep, and would thus be solved if only Sandinista Nicaragua could be removed from the regional map. The Contadora countries were joined in later years by four countries known as the "Lima group" - Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. The Contadora's peace initiatives went forward in fits and starts, with the U.S. effectively blocking the signing of any accord. The revelations of the Iran-Contra hearings and subsequent trials point to the ongoing U.S. pressure levelled against the other Central American countries in an attempt to prevent peace from breaking out in the region.

Subsequent Esquipulas summit meetings were held and in February 1989, Daniel Ortega agreed to push the Nicaraguan elections up in exchange for the demobilization of the contra forces. With no calendar attached to the contra demobilization, the plan failed and the next summit meeting (August 1989) called for the contras to be demobilized and repatriated to Nicaragua by early December - the official kick-off of the 1990 election campaign.

Nicaragua's goal was to hold elections - most scrutinized, perhaps, in history - in a climate of peace and reconciliation. The United States, by refusing to give the contras the green light to demobilize, ensured that the real choice that Nicaraguans would face on February 25 was continued war with the Sandinistas or the long-awaited peace that only the UNO, given its close association with the U.S., could promise the electorate. Nicaraguans went to the polls with a gun held to their collective throats, and it was not until two months

after Violeta Chamorro's inauguration that the U.S. finally gave up its key military card in the country.

### The Economic Onslaught

In the early 1970s, with the U.S. attempting to bring down the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende in Chile, Henry Kissinger commented that he wanted to "make the economy scream." That has been one of the key U.S. goals in Nicaragua as well, as constant economic pressure on Nicaragua, with the accompanying disastrous results, sent an already weak and damaged economy into a tailspin from which it will take many years to recover.

TODAY  
THERE IS NEITHER  
THE GLORIFYING OF GOD  
NOR PEACE  
ON EARTH



AS LONG AS A HUNGER  
IS NOT YET STILLED  
AND AS LONG AS WE HAVE  
NOT UPROOTED  
VIOLENCE  
FROM OUR CIVILIZATION  
CHRIST IS NOT  
YET BORN  
GANDHI

The economic war was felt in several ways. With ongoing attacks by the contra forces and CIA operatives, material destruction in Nicaragua began to mount. The cooperatives that were burned to the ground, the miles of telephone lines that were downed, the electrical pylons that were blown up all represented a tremendous cost to the government. In the early years of the war, much effort was expended in rebuilding what had been attacked - but that became less and less feasible after the second, third or even fourth round of destruction.

In addition to the physical destruction caused by the military war itself, Nicaragua was effectively cut off from loans and credit through the World Bank and the IMF - funding sources key to most third world countries' survival in the recessionary 1980s. Along with the loan and credit cut-off, the U.S. declared an economic embargo against Nicaragua in May 1985, tightening the economic screws.

Nicaragua took the U.S. to the World Court for war damages and won its case in June 1986. According to that decision, the United States owes Nicaragua some \$17 billion dollars in damages, related to both direct and indirect effects of its war. The U.S. has not paid a penny and is reportedly pressuring the Chamorro government to withdraw its suit.

### The Ideological War

Two parallel ideological offensives against the Sandinistas - one in Nicaragua, the other in the U.S. - formed a less tangible, but always critical, aspect of the ongoing U.S. war. In the U.S., that war was played out primarily in the mainstream media, as the Reagan administration moved quickly and surely - using such mechanisms as the State Department's Office of Public Diplomacy - to close political debate about Nicaragua in Congress and throughout the country. The Reagan vision of the Nicaraguan government as totalitarian, atheistic and little more than an extension of Havana and Moscow began to take hold and those who challenged the administration found themselves increasingly isolated and sometimes harassed for their beliefs.

Inside Nicaragua, a number of forces received support from the U.S. to aid them in their anti-Sandinista struggles. They included La Prensa, the rightwing daily newspaper run by Violeta Chamorro; COSEP, the staunchly anti-Sandinista businessmen's association; some of the rightwing unions and political parties (for example, the AIFLD-sponsored CUS union); and the Catholic hierarchy. All these groups enjoyed close and regular contact with the U.S. embassy in Managua. The U.S. was fomenting ideological struggle (often referred to by U.S. officials as a "civic struggle") inside Nicaragua to



complement its ongoing military war.

In the countryside, the official church, which has considerable weight in Nicaragua, spread accusations that the Sandinistas were atheist, that they would kidnap children and send them off to Cuba. Many priests refused to say mass for fallen Sandinista soldiers, and homilies and sermons became increasingly confrontational political treatises more than religious reflections. Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo, referred to cynically by one Managua political observer as "the spiritual leader of the contra forces," was perhaps the key opposition figure by the late 1980s, yet because of his religious position it was very difficult for the government to respond to him politically.

The ideological war by 1990 had helped to create a very polarized situation in Nicaragua that could have potentially dangerous consequences in the months and years to come.

#### Whither the U.S. War?

The post-February period in Nicaragua, rather than signalling an end to the U.S. war against Nicaragua as a result of UNO's electoral victory, means that the United States has had to shift gears. The war against the Sandinistas goes on, with three fundamental goals. One, the U.S. and its UNO allies will try and destroy the Sandinista army as it is presently constructed. The strikes of May and July were used by UNO extremists as "proof" that the army is too political and can't be expected to uphold order in the country. General

Humberto Ortega has taken care - to the point of alienating some of the more leftwing sectors of the FSLN - to make it clear that his allegiance is to the Constitution, and therefore to President Chamorro, and also underscores that the EPS is an army that will never turn on its own people.

The U.S. will also be working to chip away at the FSLN's substantial base of popular support. The prime means by which to do this is to create parallel organizations - unions, mass organizations and the like - to challenge the Sandinistas in workplaces and neighborhoods where they have solid base of support. The FSLN hopes to broaden its base, both among traditional supporters as well as with UNO voters who are economically hard hit, and feel betrayed, by the new government's policies.

The third US-UNO task for the time being is to try and create divisions in the FSLN ranks and destroy the party from within. While there are a number of different views inside the FSLN about which way the party should go, for the moment the party maintains a great deal of internal unity and has taken the position that more openness and democracy are its best safeguards in the long run.

So, while the contra war - the most visible aspect of U.S. policy in Nicaragua in the 1980s - has come to an end, the 1990s promise to be years of increased tension as a long drawn-out battle for the hearts and minds of the Nicaraguan people continues.



"The 'political animal' can be defeated, without necessarily receiving bullets... Our target, then, is the minds of the population, all the population: our troops, the enemy troops, the civilian population."

CIA Manual for the contra



"Humanitarian assistance is a fundamental Department of Defense mission in low intensity warfare." "It is an integral part of military operations."

U.S. General

"All of this was done under the formal rubric of refugee emergency assistance and resettlement, and of rural development, in order to conform to AID categories of approved activity. In actual fact, it constituted the civilian front of an unconventional war which could not have been prosecuted without the aid program."

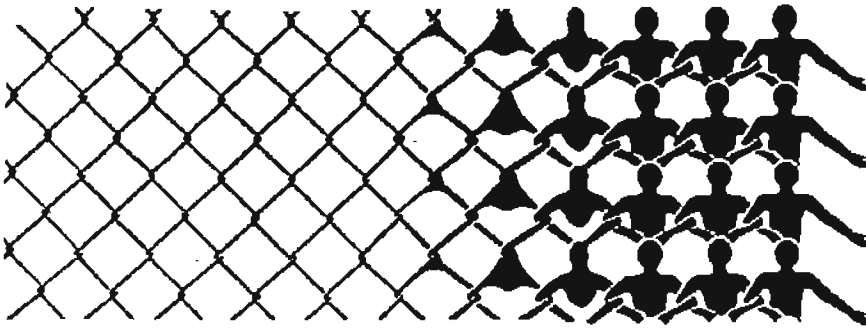
Douglas Blufarb  
former CIA chief of station  
Vietnam



Low intensity conflict is "total war at the grassroots level." It is the integration of "political, economic and psychological warfare, with the military being a distant fourth in many cases."

Col. John Waghelstein  
Seventh Special Forces, U.S. Army

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"...we have to demonstrate that we are still the decisive force in determining the political outcomes in Central America and that we will not permit others to intervene."

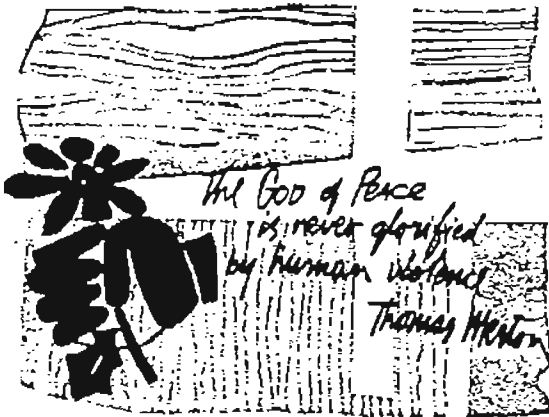
Zbigniew Brzezinski

It takes relatively few people and little support to disrupt the internal peace and economic stability of a small country.

William Casey  
CIA Director

"We have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its populations... In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so we have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming... We should cease to talk about vague and... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards and democratization."

George Kennan  
U.S. State Department, 1948



"Low intensity conflict (LIC), by definition, is that amount of murder, mutilation, torture, rape and savagery that is sustainable without triggering widespread public disapproval at home.

Michael Klare  
defense correspondent  
for the Nation



# FROM KAREN HOUSE

by Teka Childress



"What's to live for?" A young woman kept repeating these words to me as we sat in the back yard of Karen House. She had been telling me about her life, describing the pain and losses she had experienced. The question she spoke aloud is one that we all must face and answer for ourselves, and yet, she was asking it of me as well. She wanted a response from me.

How does one answer such a question? How does one ever answer the suffering of another, particularly if the person suffering experiences it as overwhelming or meaningless?

I was wrestling with this dilemma around Pentecost. I had been eagerly awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. I had been thinking about many of the women who stay with us and of the struggles they live with: the separations from family, often their own children, drug addictions, the loss of loved ones through violence, the lack of a home or even the prospect of one, and mental illness (the loss of control over something as personal as one's own thoughts).

This Pentecost I was particularly wondering what the Spirit's coming would mean for those feeling despair. Shortly after that time I picked up Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov.

I was struck by the challenge posed by Ivan as he spoke with his younger brother Aloysha. Aloysha, a faith-filled novice, had wanted to know if Ivan believed in God. Ivan answered, "It's not that I don't accept God, you must understand. It's the world created by God I don't and cannot accept."

He particularly could not accept the suffering of an innocent child who had been cruelly tortured. He believed the harmony of the universe was not worth the agony of that one child.

I found his statement tremendously compelling. There is some way in which we should never accept the suffering of another. Ivan felt most keenly for the innocent child because in that case it seemed so senseless, yet in every case I think suffering should call forth compassion. This is not to say that suffering cannot allow for

transformation or be an opportunity for grace. It's not to say that we can always do something to stop it. It's just that we should always desire to ease the suffering of another or feel sorrow with them in the face of it. We should never be complacent about it. Never. And, whenever appropriate and possible we should do everything within our means to end it. This reality of senseless suffering led Ivan himself to struggle with despair.

Another character in the book also wonders about faith and meaning. Madame Holokov asks the holy monk, Father Zossima, "What if I've been believing all my life, and when I come to die there's nothing but weeds growing on my grave? . . . How can I get back my faith? How can I prove it?" He answers her, "There's no proving it, though you can become convinced of it."

"How?"

"By the experience of active love. Strive to love your neighbor actively and constantly. In so far as you advance in love, you will grow surer of the reality of God and of the immortality of your soul."

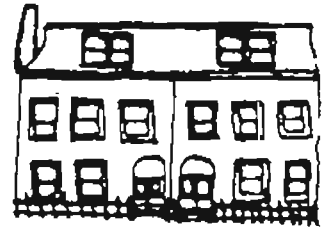
I think Father Zossima's response not only answers Madame Holokov's question, but Ivan's dilemma. Our response to those who suffer is to love them, actively and constantly. Then, not only will we become convinced ourselves of the reality of God, but so will they, as they experience God's love as it is expressed, even through the likes of us.

When the young woman asked me, "What's to live for?", I'm convinced she was asking me to actively love her, to ease her burden by listening to her, by sharing her sorrow and by helping her.

The greatest miracle of this life is that love does exist in the world, that it has become incarnate, that we often can love one another as frail as we are, that we can experience love in the midst of suffering ourselves, and in this joyful realization, desire to share it with others. This is the what that there is to live for, and others will be convinced of it, not only by our words of love, but by our acts of love. +

# FROM LITTLE HOUSE

by Mary Ann McGivern



Last July Judge Limbaugh, the federal judge who has charge of integrating St. Louis schools, ordered the Board of Education to end its five year discussion of a magnet school and build the thing — on the site of the Little House.

Actually, the site is bigger, but Little House is smack in the middle of the boundaries, Cass to Madison and 15th to Hogan. It includes Jackson School, three machine shops, a junk yard and a truck lot, about forty property owners and renters. The school will be a good use for the vacant land which abounds, but, oh, the loss hurts.

I am so aware of the soundness of my house. The floors don't squeak. The walls are three courses of brick, furring, and plaster. The doors are solid wood. The house is quiet and sound doesn't travel.

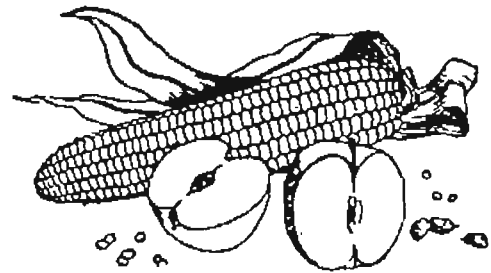
I am also keenly conscious of all the men and women who have labored to do the rehab and who have lived there. I find myself remembering Tom Angert repairing the chimney when it was struck by lightning, Steve Rossell collecting money from his coworkers for a ceiling fan and installing it, Virginia Druhe creating a classy tablecloth from old draperies. It will be at least a year before we have to move, maybe two years. No doubt my consciousness of the building's impending doom and my appreciation of the bathroom tile work and storm window installation will greatly strengthen my habits of mindfulness.

We met with the Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) and learned the process will be a neighborhood meeting in October (as The Round Table is going to press), then official presentation of the plan to Judge Limbaugh, followed by official notification of the residents. There follows a process of negotiation. The simplest and best solution will be if LRA can offer us an equivalent house — and garden lot. They would provide some cash if repairs were necessary and pay the cost of moving. If they simply purchased the building, they would pay fair market value, not replacement value. In our neighborhood, buildings have been selling for three to six thousand dollars, less than the value of the bricks. So we hope we can find a suitable house to

trade within LRA's properties. LRA will help renters and businesses relocate as well as resident home owners.

Times like these demonstrate that we, the Catholic Workers, are in a position of privilege. We learned about the court order very early because, as Mike Goeke said, "You are incredibly tuned in to the information network." So we are better prepared to negotiate. Further, we have nothing really to lose. The Little House doesn't carry our retirement equity. Another house will do nicely, could be even better. And if it isn't quite so splendid as the Little House on the Vacant Lot, we are confident it will become a fine house.

Lorraine is living here now, with her six children. The oldest two, ages 8 and 6, love the garden. Our dog, Fleetwood, loves them all. He and the cat still don't understand that they live upstairs and stand outside their old home doors, waiting to be let in. Fleetwood particularly hears the children and wants to be with them. The whole family feeds him and pets him and loves him.



The garden continues to be splendid. Tomatoes are finally ripening. I picked two dozen this morning. There will be enough this fall to supply Karen House and the whole neighborhood. Melons and peppers and squash are steady. Snow peas are poking through the dirt. No signs of lettuce or spinach though. Maybe we can work a garden lot trade with the city where they haul out the rubble from one of the spaces near Karen House and haul in truck loads of manure and mulch and wood chips. Then Tim and Katrina and I and any of the rest of you who share our grandiose visions of a small truck farm in the city can get to work. ✦

Mary Ann McGivern, S.L., is editing a 1991 weekly calendar as a fundraiser for the Economic Conversion Project that will contain vital art work, dates for social action events and commentary. You can place an order by calling 1-726-6406. Catholic Worker www.KarenHouseCW.org 314.621.4052 1840 Hogan St. Louis Missouri 63106

# FROM LATIN AMERICA

by Catherine Nolan



I recently spent two weeks traveling in Central America, primarily in Nicaragua with Witness for Peace and for two days in Guatemala. It was a rich time of learning about these lands and about people whose lives are so profoundly affected by decisions in the United States. Since returning I am struck by how little news out of Central America there is in our press. One Sunday, at last, there was something about Nicaragua. It was a photograph of two children carrying their desks home after school because there are not enough desks or supplies for them to use in the schools.

There was no story with this photograph, but I can fill in some of the story because of what I have learned this summer.

Nicaragua's economy is devastated after a decade of funding a war while enduring a U.S. trade embargo and a boycott by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. During our visit we watched the value of the cordoba (currency) plummet from one week to the next. Unemployment is high — a problem exacerbated by demobilized contra who have no land and no jobs. There is barely enough money for food. There is no money to build desks or even the schools in which to put the desks and the students.

In the photograph I saw how the pressure of the U.S. strategy of low-intensity conflict in Nicaragua has perpetuated itself, even though guns have been laid down. Nicaraguans have so little. This is a country in which the majority of its people have always been poor. They live simply, with great dignity and generosity, which I was privileged to experience. Their strongest desire now is to return to work, to school, to the land. Yet the war waged with U.S. dollars has drained funds from schools, health care and literacy programs.

I also saw in the photograph the determination to overcome the difficulties of the present. Everywhere we went in Nicaragua we met people full of hope that there was a solution to their problems. Some believed the solution would come through U.S. aid, some through a new government and the reordering of the economy, some through prayer. Many people believe that reconciliation with former enemies and working together in

local communities will bear the best fruit. We met with such a group — the Peace Commission of Nueva Guinea in the southern part of Nicaragua. This is a group of men and women from churches, unions, community organizations, from the Sandinistas and from the contra. These people are daily forging plowshares out of swords with their work. They look for small victories — a negotiated conflict, a settled property dispute, clothing and food for the demobilized — out of which to fashion a better community for all who live there.

I wish more of the story could have been told with that photograph. For many people in the U.S., Nicaragua is a forgotten country. It is yesterday's news, as is Panama and El Salvador and all of Central America. We don't see in a simple photograph how decisions here continue to affect the lives of those children. The State Department representative with whom we spoke at the U.S. Embassy in Managua could scarcely be prevailed upon to accept any responsibility for a Nicaraguan economy crushed by the estimated \$17 billion damage done by U.S. meddling in the last ten years. Moreover, the U.S. continues to exert pressure on the fragile coalition of the current administration — pressure that may very well provoke greater instability or outright violence between factions.

There is still the need to look beyond the brief glimpses we receive of life in Central America. Our lives are linked to theirs, by our desire to stand with the poor and, even more, by our moral obligation to repair the brokenness of Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama. In Nicaragua this obligation is acute, because there is still so much that is possible there. Despite the suffering, there is enduring beauty and joy in the people, the land, and even in the damaged dream of a transformed society. Their hope for community with us is strong; they do not see us as enemies. It is our work to remember them and nourish that hope. ✦

Catherine Nolan is a founding member of Kopavi, one of the great lay communities of St. Louis, and does public education on AIDS with the Red Cross.

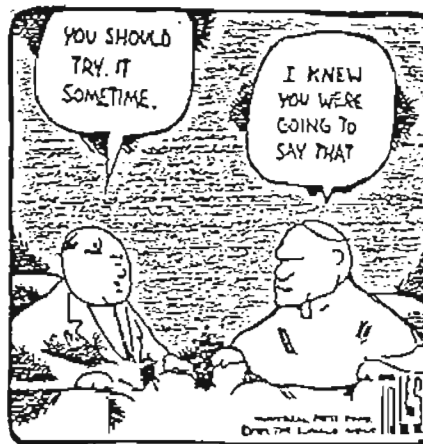
Kopavi House of Prayer, 1840 Hogan St., St. Louis, Missouri 63106

by Mark Scheu

Recently I left the community chapel at a Tuesday evening liturgy after waiting fifteen minutes for the priest to arrive. I realize that questioning glances from several community members was an indication of their puzzlement, but truth is sometimes found at the end of a path of cordial disagreements.

I left as a matter of principle: not out of anger at the individual who was late, but at indignation at the abuse of power which our church abets. The belated arrival of the priest is not uncommon. This is not to say that a particular priest, or priests as a whole, are inconsiderate or arrogant. On the contrary, we enjoy the exceptional privilege of choosing which priest to ask to celebrate mass with us, so those we invite are remarkable in the very virtues which tend to diminish opportunities for such abuse. They are foremost servants, self-effacing and desirous of sharing power. That is one reason we invite them. Indeed, I find they far excel me in these desirable qualities.

So why leave just because a priest is late? I find that an entire assembly contingent on the arrival of a privileged one in order to enact their worship is at the heart of what is wrong with the church. Bear in mind that for most communities, unfortunately, the priest is appointed from outside the community without its consultation. Just as I must seek the courage and means not to cooperate with the abusive structures of our society, I believe that I must also learn how not to cooperate with the structure and practices of the church which empower the clergy at the expense of the people of God, and to the detriment of the church as a whole.



Is not to do less, even though it may seem unkind and may risk giving offense, sinful?

The power of the clergy is justly derived from the people of God. It is the clergy which is powerless without the people, and yet our worshiping community waiting helpless for the arrival of the priest conveys the opposite message. If we want to move the church in the direction of authenticity, we should not cooperate lamely in practices which tend to reinforce these very sophistries. My impatience with this symbolism may seem petty, but does not the power of ritual depend on symbolism?

Now I do not doubt that there was a regrettable element of self-righteousness in my act; and that too is sinful. But am I not to act because my motives are not pure? Then I would never sit in at General Dynamics; or at the Federal building when another conspicuous atrocity comes to light in El Salvador. I believe we must turn to God for mercy for all the impure motivations

which taint our actions, but we are still called to act.

Recently Leonardo Boff said that the church is in need of its own Perestroika and Glasnost. He has called for a redistribution of sacred power in the church, which would demand a redefinition of the roles of priest and bishop and which would empower the Christian community at the grass-roots level as it was in the early church.

I believe he is right. Evangelization must occur not only outside the church, but inside as well. Such actions must proceed from a spirit of humility and reconciliation, but we must accept our co-responsibility in the regeneration of the church. ✦

Mark Scheu's current spiritual guide is blues player Mississippi John Hurt, whom he believes should be canonized.

## WE ARE NOT TAX EXEMPT

All gifts to the Catholic Worker go to a common fund which is used to meet the daily expenses of our work. Gifts to our work are not tax-deductible. As a community we have never sought tax-exempt status. The traditional reasons for this position are based in personalism. We are convinced that justice and the works of mercy should be acts of conscience which are personal, without government approval, regulation or reward. We do not want to obscure the fact that justice is established at a personal cost. We believe it would be a misuse of our limited resources of time and personnel (as well as a violation of our understanding of the meaning of community) to create the organizational structure required, and to maintain the paper-work necessary, for obtaining tax-deductible status. Also, since much of what we do might be considered "political," in the sense that we strive to question, challenge and confront our present society and many of its structures and values, some would deem us technically ineligible for tax-deductible, charitable status.

# COME PRAY WITH US

We celebrate Mass twice weekly.

Little House  
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Tuesdays at 9:00 pm

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to The Round Table, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Margaret Boyer, Ann Carter, Pat Coy, Virginia Druhe, Bill Miller, Tom Nelson, Katrina Plato, Barb Prosser, Ellen Rehg, and Mark Scheu. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

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## The Round Table

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