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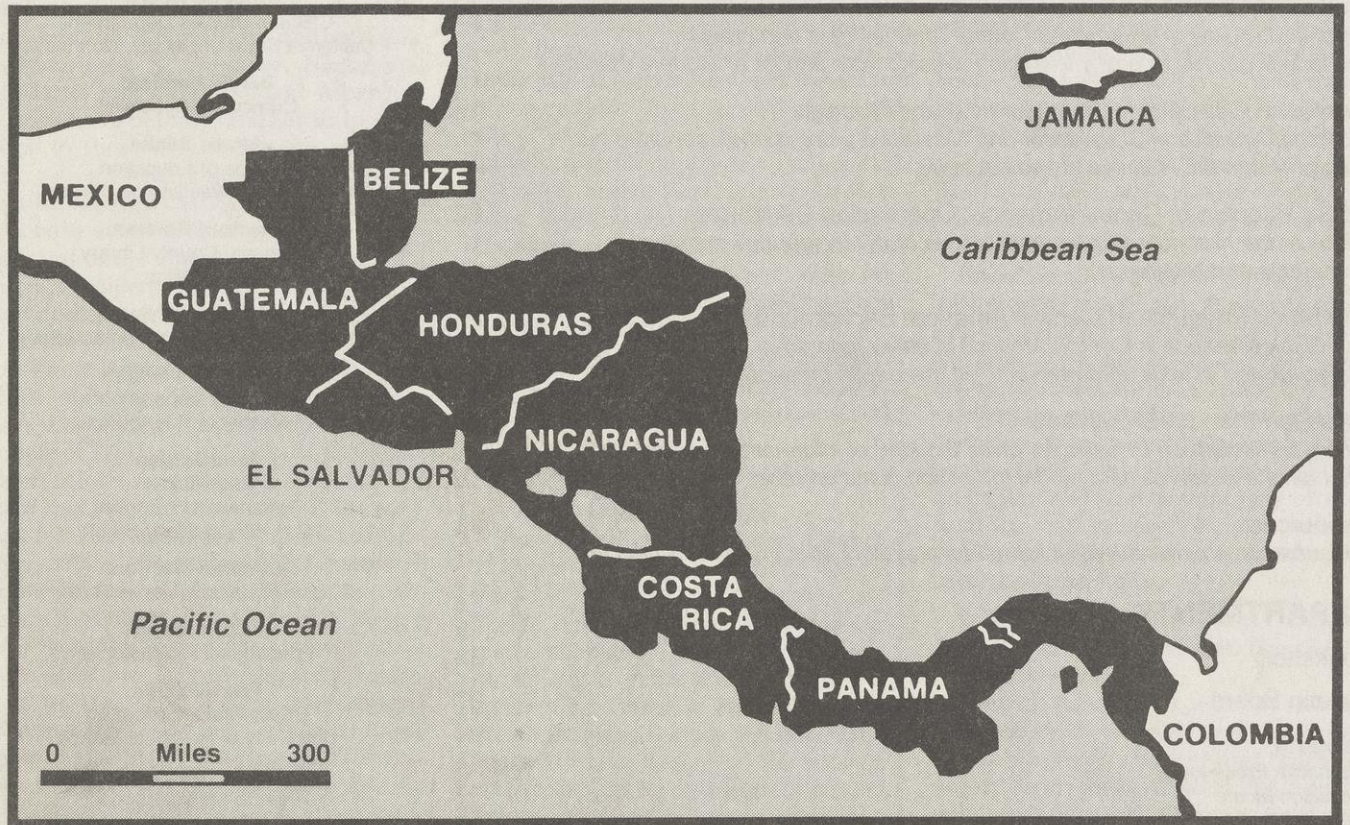
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INTERRACIAL BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BULLETIN

VOLUME 13, NUMBERS 2 & 3, 1982 ISSN 0146-5562



Central America: What U.S. Educators Need to Know

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BULLETIN

VOLUME 13, NUMBERS 2 & 3

1982

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE: CENTRAL AMERICA IN CHILDREN'S MATERIALS
GUEST EDITOR: VICTORIA ORTIZ

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An analysis of children's books on Central America reveals omissions and stereotypic views that prevent students from understanding current events in that region

School Books Get Poor Marks: An Analysis of Children's Materials about Central America

The following article is based on a study coordinated and prepared by Nancy Anderson and Rochelle Beck.

Central America has been in the headlines recently with reports of revolution, elections and U.S. military and economic aid packages; El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras and other Central American nations have become familiar at least in name to those who follow the news. In fact, name recognition is generally the only knowledge that most people in the U.S. have about Central America. *Newsweek* recently questioned 755 adults about President Reagan's handling of the situation in El Salvador; almost half of them did not respond because they did not know where El Salvador was or which side the U.S. supported.¹ CBS-*New York Times* surveyed a random sample of 1,545 adults about U.S.-El Salvador relations, and more than half of them had so little knowledge of the area they felt they could not respond at all.²

Ignorance about Central America is caused by many factors. Media coverage, except in times of emergency, has always been scanty. Even when coverage is more extensive, it is often based primarily if not exclusively on materials and sources which reflect the official U.S. position at that time.³ As a result, U.S. citizens rarely get enough detail or context to make informed judgments about leaders or events there.

¹Melinda Beck et al., "The Fire Next Door," *Newsweek*, March 1, 1982.

²The results of this survey were reported in "Central America: Region in Revolt," a CBS Special news program aired March 20, 1982.

³Jonathan Maslow and Ana Arana, "Operation El Salvador," *Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June, 1981.

Where does this chain of ignorance begin? What are children taught about Central America? To find out, a content analysis was undertaken of children's materials in current use. Materials were identified through *Subject Guide to Children's Books in Print*, *El-Hi Textbooks in Print*, lists of elementary and secondary texts available from educational publishers and materials from the United Nations. A preliminary list included 15 children's books plus numerous textbooks. World geography, world history, U.S. history and social studies texts were considered because they are often students' only source of information about Central America. It was soon found, however, that the majority of these texts had such a paucity of information about Central America that it would be of little

Media Coverage

The initial findings of the Council study on how Central America is portrayed in children's materials were released April 5 and received extensive media attention. *The New York Times* ran an article on the study that day and again in the "Week in Review" section on the following Sunday. An April 6 Associated Press feature on the findings was picked up by newspapers around the country and prompted numerous editorials questioning the content of textbooks used in local schools. The Council study was also the subject of the "Donahue on Today" TV program on April 29 and CBS Radio and TV news broadcasts reported the study as well. In addition, Interlink/Inter Press Service did a feature for distribution to newspapers in foreign countries.

avail to subject them to analysis; therefore, a representative sample of 11 of these texts was selected for an in-depth examination. A total of 30 works was examined in detail; brief reviews of these books begin on page 8. A subsequent search revealed 10 additional children's books, a few of which are out of print but still very much in use. An evaluation of these books (listed on page 12) confirmed the original findings. In addition, some 31 U.S. history texts (listed on page 12) were similarly examined. A total of 71 books was examined.

Based on the preliminary survey and with the advice of Latin American scholars, criteria were prepared focusing on the accuracy of the books and their quality as teaching tools. A panel of 15 reviewers knowledgeable about Central America was selected to analyze the books. Their evaluations were analyzed and tabulated and a summary of their findings was released to the media in April (see box). Below is a report on the results of this study.

1. Books suggest that Central America is not important. They do this in a variety of ways.

*Central America is entirely omitted from many of the most commonly used world geography, history and "cultures" books. Some books about Latin America even omit Central America or do not name the individual countries there.*⁴

So little is said about Central America and Central American nations that they seem not to exist. Again and again, re-

⁴Latin America includes Mexico, Central America, Spanish-speaking islands in the Caribbean and South America. Central America is here taken to consist of Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama (see also p. 13).

viewers noted that "Central America is barely mentioned." Discussions of Latin America are often accompanied by maps that omit Central America and show only South America.

Central America is consistently given significantly fewer pages than other land masses in books purporting to cover all regions of the world. Although quantity may appear to be a trivial point, it is not. What can a child conclude when a world history devotes 11 of its 740 pages to Central America? Another world history text allocates 22 out of 838 pages to Central America. This pattern of neglect teaches children that Central America is not as important as many other parts of the world, about which they repeatedly receive more — and more detailed — information.

Often Central America is referred to merely as the "bridge" between North and South America, with no differentiation of, or attention to, its nations or peoples. One elementary geography text portrayed this graphically: its map of the Western hemisphere named all the countries — except those in Central America.

Many books combine discussions of Central American countries with those of one or more other countries, sometimes Mexico, the West Indies and/or other Caribbean nations. Others mention Central America only in passing, noting that it is part of Latin America. In all cases, this creates confusion, compounds students' vague sense of the area and reinforces their impression of Central America's unimportance.

2. Most of the books contain racial and ethnic stereotypes. Indigenous peoples and Blacks are portrayed as somnolent, lazy, less intelligent, childlike farm and manual workers and music lovers, unsuited for technological, modern societies.

Examples such as the following abound:

... It is difficult to develop stable and democratic government [in Guatemala] because so many of the nation's Indians are illiterate and superstitious. (*Let's Visit Central America*, p. 77)

The Negroes work on the docks and in port warehouses. During busy periods they sing and work steadily without rushing. At slack times many wander to other ports in search of jobs. (*Central America: Lands Seeking Unity*, p. 70)

Excitable and changeable, Nicaraguans often pour their energies into fighting. If they struggled as willingly against rugged mountains, rain forests, and swamps, they might advance more rapidly. (*Central America: Lands Seeking Unity*, p. 127)

The Politics of Textbooks

No book can be completely objective. Numerous studies have noted the ways in which children's books — and school textbooks in particular — reflect the perspectives and interests of those who control a society's institutions. This survey of books about Central America provides an outstanding example of this observation.

Most, if not all, of the flaws cited in this report are due to the biases, acknowledged or not, of the books' authors, editors and publishers. For the most part, these mirror the political perspectives of official U.S. policymakers which function to support multinational corporate interests at home and abroad. The biases are often clearest — and most misleading — in discussions of the very issues that are crucial to an understanding of current events in Central America: class structure, economic inequities, the role of U.S. corporate interests, U.S. interventions, etc.

Sometimes the books simply omit crucial topics. That is in itself a political statement. At other times, a simplistic cold-war mentality (most blatant in the older books but occurring in newer materials as well) encourages an emotional response instead of knowledge and understanding.

If it is not possible for books to be totally bias-free, it is possible, and absolutely essential, that textbooks include a variety of points of view, especially when those viewpoints are supported by abundant historical evidence and regardless of whether they run counter to "official" policy.

Although Inge's people prefer to live as they have for centuries, modern times are catching up with them. (*Enchantment of Central America: Panama*, p. 22)

Latin America loves its fiestas. Especially with music. The people of all these countries are born music lovers. (*Getting to Know Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua*, p. 49)

When you arrive at the simmering airfield of Nicaragua's capital and hear the airplane's loudspeaker announce "Managua, Nicaragua," this is not meant to be an imitation of Donald Duck. (*The Land and People of Central America*, p. 18)

Chico liked to work with his hands much better than he liked to work with his brain. (*Chico of Guatemala*, p. 22)

3. Books lead students to conclude that the major causes of underdevelopment and poverty are climate, physical terrain and the shortcomings of Central Americans. Exploitation is rarely mentioned.

Many books fail to mention or discuss the internal class structures in Central American nations, the economic patterns and land systems which created and help maintain underdevelopment. While all the books refer to the region's poverty, they do not help students understand the ways in which unequal land and income distribution, economic exploitation and the ruling elite's need to maintain dominance are in fact the major causes of the ills that are grouped under the term underdevelopment: poverty, widespread disease, high infant mortality rates, illiteracy, inadequate housing, poor transportation systems, malnutrition, etc. Instead, many books imply that the poor are the cause of their own sufferings. Without information about the critical social and economic forces in Central American history, it is impossible to understand current dissatisfactions or reform movements — or to evaluate whom U.S. policy should be supporting.

Almost three-fourths of the books reviewed fail to discuss the impact of external economic interests (e.g., the United Fruit Company) in creating and maintaining these nations' poverty. Books present a one-sided and over-simplified picture of the role of the U.S.-based United Fruit Company (now called United Brands) in the economic development of Central America, and one goes so far as to suggest that the reader "think of big companies like the United Fruit Company as providing foreign aid" (*Let's Visit Central America*, p. 74).

Most books do not discuss the exploitative role of the United Fruit Company, or its links with the U.S. government.⁵ For instance, in 1951 the U.S. opposed and

⁵It is, for example, instructive to look at U.S. government links with United Fruit in 1954, when the U.S. was involved in the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala because its land reform policy would deprive United Fruit Company of some of its profits. Sullivan and Cromwell, the law firm headed by John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State at the time, was the chief legal counsel to United Fruit. Dulles' brother Allen, Director of the CIA, was in charge of "Operation Success," the plan to topple Arbenz; Allen Dulles was also a member of Sullivan and Cromwell and a shareholder of United Fruit as well. General Robert Cutler, head of the

Continued on following page

refused aid to Guatemala for construction of a highway to the Atlantic because the highway would interfere with the monopoly on industrial transportation held by International Railways of Central America — a United Fruit affiliate.

4. Books communicate that Central American countries are important only insofar as they directly affect U.S. economic or strategic interests.

In almost half the books reviewed, no mention is made of treaties, wars, cultures or trade when the U.S. was not directly involved. Alliance and conflict within Central America, either between countries or within national borders, is barely touched upon. Thus, children get little sense of issues and relationships among Central American nations or the influence of other nations in the area.

One example of an important event omitted from textbooks because it did not directly involve U.S. interests is "La Matanza" ("The Slaughter") in El Salvador. In 1932, Salvadoran peasants, artisans and workers, armed only with machetes and stones, rebelled against the oppression in which the majority of the population lived. This uprising gained the support of many Salvadorans. The paramilitary forces, organized by the large landowners and supported by the Salvadoran army, killed 30,000 Salvadorans within a month. Peasant leaders were hanged in the town squares, their bodies left there for days as a warning to anyone else contemplating opposition to the military rule which was established. Firing squads rounded up all those with Indian features and shot them. In all, 4 per cent of the entire Salvadoran population had been killed. This massacre began the 50-

year rule of the military in El Salvador. Without knowing this, students are seriously hampered in understanding the causes of the present situation in El Salvador. They are also unable to evaluate U.S. foreign policy toward the country.

In most U.S. history texts, discussion of U.S. relations with any Central American nation is limited to the Monroe Doctrine and the Panama Canal. The description of the Canal frequently is limited to how the U.S.'s superior abilities succeeded in getting it built. Typical of many texts is the following brief account:

Many routes have been used across this narrow bridge of land between North and South America, but as yet there is only one canal, the Panama Canal. Begun by the French in 1882, the work was difficult, especially in what was then such an unhealthy area. Many workmen lost their lives. Later the construction was taken over by the United States, and the canal still belongs to the U.S.A., together with a strip of land on each side. (*Mexico, Central America and the West Indies, p. 44*)

It is rare to find books that even hint at the degree of blatant U.S. interference in the destinies of Panama and Colombia. *World History* is better than most in this regard.

American engineers suggested two possible locations for the canal. . . . The Senate picked Panama as the site for the canal. Panama, however, was part of Colombia. The United States offered to pay Colombia \$10 million plus a yearly rental of \$250,000 for a strip of land through the Isthmus. Colombia wanted more money, however, and rejected the proposal. Then a revolution broke out in Panama on November 3, 1903. By a strange coincidence, that very same day, an American gunboat arrived in the harbor of Colón in Panama. The American ship prevented Colombia from landing troops to put down the revolt. Three days later, the United States recognized the new republic of Panama. On November 18, Panama signed a treaty with the United States for construction of a canal. . . . Colombia was furious. But it lacked the power to do anything about the situation. . . . (pp. 510-511)

5. Books distort the role of the U.S. in Central America, portraying it only as the perennial "helper."

The U.S. has repeatedly intervened in the internal affairs of Central American nations. Rarely are these interventions mentioned. The 34 U.S. military interventions in the area from 1898-1932 — and the numerous interventions, both covert and overt, since then — are ignored.

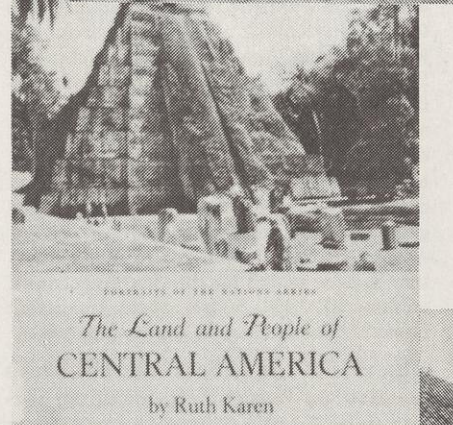
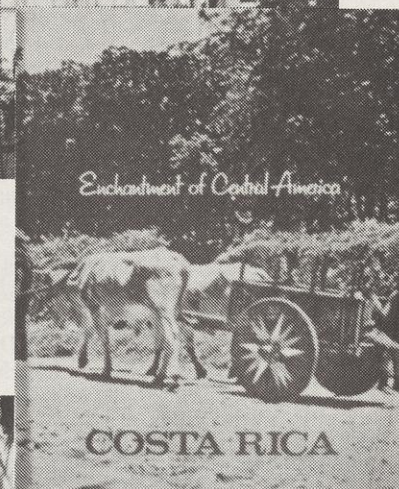
A striking example is the inaccurate and misleading treatment of the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Gua-

Continued from previous page

National Security Council, was on the board of directors of United Fruit. The brother of John Moores Cabot, Undersecretary of State for Latin America, was president of United Fruit. Spruille Braden, Secretary for Latin American Affairs, became director of United Fruit and Walter Bedell Smith, Director of the CIA before Dulles, became a director of United Fruit a year after the Arbenz overthrow. President Dwight Eisenhower's private secretary was Ann Whitman, whose husband Ed was United Fruit's public relations director. Last but not least, Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was a major United Fruit stockholder. When the Guatemalan government urgently requested that the U.N. Security Council be called into session to deal with the efforts to overthrow Arbenz, the request was turned down by the president of the Security Council—who happened to be Henry Cabot Lodge.

PANAMA

and the CANAL ZONE



Above, some children's books on Central America. Almost all of the children's books that are available mirror official U.S. policy, neglecting the Central American grass-roots perspectives that would give students a more accurate understanding of current events in that region.

temala in 1954 that occurs in many texts. The following is typical:

Jacobo Arbenz was the president of Guatemala from 1950 to 1954. While he may not have been a Marxist, he was in favor of them [sic]. Arbenz was defeated, though, before he had a chance to make long-lasting changes in Guatemala. (*Insights: Latin America*, pp. 106-107)

These brief accounts misrepresent history. Jacobo Arbenz was elected in 1950 by 63 per cent of the Guatemalan electorate. As Stephen Kinzer wrote in "Isthmus of Violence":

Jacobo Arbenz won congressional approval for an agrarian program aimed at giving poor Guatemalan peasants access to land for the first time. Soon after the law was passed, Guatemala's National Agrarian Department began to expropriate the vast unused properties [some 400,000 acres] owned by United Fruit.

This was too great an outrage for Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to accept. Instinctively hostile to Arbenz anyway because of Guatemala's leftist drift, Dulles agreed that the regime would have to be overthrown.

Dulles' brother Allen, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, had successfully deposed the government of Iran just a year earlier. He was called upon to duplicate the feat in Guatemala, and he went about the job with gusto. Agents established clandestine radio stations to spread misinformation in Guatemala, American pilots flew unmarked planes that bombed military and civilian targets, and the CIA put together a motley "Liberation Army" of exiles and mercenaries under the control of a disgruntled Guatemalan colonel. President Arbenz, already unpopular in many quarters, was no match for the CIA juggernaut; on June 27, 1954, he [resigned]. . . . (*The Boston Globe Magazine*, August 16, 1981)

The role of the U.S. is almost always presented as benign, encouraging students to be "shocked" if they hear about anti-American sentiment. Many books seriously distort events by characterizing the U.S. as a "helper." One book does mention that the U.S. intervened in Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Guatemala, but concludes only that "this caused some problems."

Books frequently mention the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps as programs whose only purpose is to "help" the receiving countries. They fail to place either program in the broader context of U.S. economic and political interests — particularly the shift in focus of U.S. aid after the Cuban Revolution. The majority of books carry sentiments like the following:

As you watch your new friends strive to create a better life, you can be proud that our country is helping them toward their

goal. (*Getting to Know Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua*, p. 61)

Yet, another viewpoint — one that does not appear in any other book reviewed — is presented in *The Human Expression*:

The Alliance for Progress was President

Sexism by Omission and Commission

History books have always been — and unfortunately continue to be — sexist, particularly by omission. That is, histories, for both children and adults, never show the ways in which women have been movers and doers in individual countries, regions, continents or the whole world. (Needless to say, the same statement can be made regarding the history books' omission of Blacks, Indian peoples, Asians, Latinos, the poor in general, and workers — men and women, Black, brown, white, etc.)

The books about Central America included in the accompanying study must all, to a greater or lesser degree, be termed sexist. This is not so much because they contain overt material which is offensive to women (although quite a few of them do) nor because they consistently use only masculine pronouns and make no attempt to include women even linguistically. More significantly, they neglect to let the reader know that there have always been women who have struggled and worked in all the areas in which their male counterparts have been active. A few of the books have taken the trouble to find and name a handful of women artists or performers, the "Great Women" approach; these efforts are to be applauded but they are insufficient. Other books, if they deal with social customs, have been quick to mention the "machismo" of the region, but generally they present it as virtually another quaint custom practiced by the rather backward Central Americans: chauvinism is not discussed as a serious social, economic, historical and cultural problem which affects the lives of all the women and of the men. Neither is any connection made between "machismo" and the sexism in other countries.

Books about Central America need to include information about women's roles in the history of these countries. They should also discuss the ways in which women's roles are changing. An article on this topic begins on page 19.

John F. Kennedy's program for containing Castro's appeal. The program called for large-scale U.S. aid. The money was to be matched by equally large amounts from participating countries. It was meant to pay the cost of a peaceful social revolution. Along with economic development, the Alliance was to promote democratic and social justice. . . . Ten years of the Alliance for Progress accomplished little. Some of its inspiration was lost when Kennedy was killed. It failed, too, because the traditional landowning class in Latin America resisted change. In addition the U.S. compromised its aims even as they were announced. From the beginning it cooperated with conservative and military elements. The Alliance spent \$10 billion. Two-thirds of it went to military rulers or military-controlled governments. Much of the money went for weapons and not for social reform. (p. 778)

6. Books emphasize "exotic" differences, creating an obstacle to the fullest understanding of Central America.

In one children's book — *Chico of Guatemala* — the main character with whom young readers might identify is not even given a name, nor are other members of his family. He is merely called "Chico," which is the Spanish word for "little boy." The text is punctuated by lengthy phonetic spellings of Spanish words (often incorrect), which, in conjunction with the exotic story line and the stereotyped characters, emphasize superficial differences between the lives of children in Guatemala and the U.S.

Illustrations are often stereotypical. They reinforce the racism noted above and distort the realities of life in Central America by focusing almost exclusively on the "exotic," the "primitive," the rural, the indigenous populations and the ruins of ancient civilizations. Many books fail to show urban dwellers, professionals, middle-class workers or the wealthy nor do they include enough modern settings; the variety of everyday life in Central America is thus ignored. There are few scenes of anyone leading a modern life which U.S. students might see as similar to their own. Women are generally shown in "traditional" settings; they are also often shown as "Spanish señoritas" in mantillas, long earrings and flounced dresses with captions that refer to them as "girls" in "native dress." In addition, there are few illustrations showing families or in any way reflecting the importance of family life at all levels of Central American society.

Significant achievements by Central Americans — in science, math, art, mus-

ic, literature or leadership — are mentioned only in passing. Students are not told enough about the achievements of the ancient Meso-American civilizations, including the Aztecs and Mayas, and contemporary achievements by Central American poets, scientists, inventors and diplomats are neglected as well.

Central Americans are presented from a Eurocentric perspective. Some books emphasize the “superstition,” “bizarre spectacles such as human sacrifices” and the “pagan practices that still exist among the Indians.”

In the first place, excessive focusing on these areas while deemphasizing current political and social problems does not give the young reader an accurate picture of the region.

In the second place, many books do not mention that (a) there is serious question as to whether any of the indigenous civilizations did in fact practice human sacrifice and, if so, in what context; (b) one person’s belief is often another person’s superstition; and (c) in most Central American countries, religion plays a more significant role than it does in the U.S. today.

One reviewer found that “no modern Central Americans are mentioned by name in the text. Instead, the only people mentioned are North Americans, Spaniards and one Indian leader.” Half the books reviewed do not mention people at all; they confine their discussions to geography, soil and crops. Those that do discuss people present them either as “dignified but exotic” or negatively stereotyped. The result is that students are unlikely to understand the concerns, motivations or potential of Central American people or to understand historical or current events.

7. Books often convey one of two distorted images: Central America is either a lush, tranquil backwater with rural peasants and no problems, or it is a violent, politically unstable, trouble-torn area where governments topple swiftly at the hands of machine-gun toting guerrillas.

The books give little sense of contemporary politics, of what political movements exist, their history and context, who supports them.

Some books’ neglect of politics leads them to portray the region as a placid, uneventful place. A typical reviewer’s report reads: “One could never predict the present turmoil in the region on the basis of reading this text. There is nothing in the content or tone which implies deep-seated problems or strife within the

region or between the region and the U.S.” Most books present dictators’ lip-service to democracy as if it reflected reality; there are few facts about how countries in Central America actually are governed.

Similarly, reasons for political instability, revolutions, dictatorships, oligarchies or emigration are oversimplified. For example, one book explains that:

Central American countries have for years been politically unstable. It is not uncommon for one ruler to be assassinated and quickly replaced by another. This is another reason why this whole area could be a world trouble spot. (*Mexico, Central America and the West Indies*, p. 44)

Ignoring the poverty, ill-health and repression of the indigenous populations, another book states merely:

The Indians pose one of the major problems of Central America. They are an ideal group for Communist agents to work on. (*Central America: Lands Seeking Unity*, p. 205)

Several texts attribute complex events — including revolution — in Central America simply to the proximity of Communism in Cuba. Instead of explaining how internal events in each nation might cause dissatisfaction or revolt, readers are left with the idea that: 1) Cuba is bad because it is communist; 2) Central American revolutions might be bad because they include ideologies similar to Cuba’s; 3) therefore, the U.S. should not support these revolutions. The possibility that a revolution can be a positive force for social change is never suggested. One reviewer noted: “Revolution is not a disease. It is a choice people make about how to change their lives. It is important to point out causes of unrest and violence; otherwise children think they are something a country catches, like a cold.”

Recommendations

It is recommended:

1. That publishers review their titles in light of these findings and consider them when revising textbooks and preparing new ones;

2. That members of textbook adoption committees, teachers and librarians evaluate materials in light of these findings and share their concerns by providing feedback to publishers’ regional sales representatives and by writing to publishers directly, indicating desired changes;

3. That parents and community members examine the texts used in their schools and discuss any inadequacies

The United Fruit Company

by Pablo Neruda

When the trumpet sounded
all was prepared on the earth
and Jehovah divided the world
among Coca Cola Incorporated,
Anaconda, Ford Motors and other
entities.

The United Fruit Company Incorporated
reserved for itself the most succulent
portion:

the central coast of my land,
the sweet waistline of America.

It rechristened its lands
“the Banana Republics,”

and on the sleeping corpses,
on the uneasy heroes

who conquered that greatness,
that freedom, and those flags,
it established an opera bouffe:

it enraptured all fancies,
granted Caesar’s laurels,

unsheathed envy, and attracted
the dictatorship of the flies,

Trujillo flies, Tacho flies,
Carias flies, Martínez flies,

Ubico flies, flies sticky
with humble blood and marmalade,
drunken flies buzzing over the people’s
tombs,

circus flies, sage flies
familiar with tyranny.

Among the sanguinary flies
United Fruit embarks,

its boats brimful with coffee and fruit,
gliding like trays with the treasure
of our drowning lands.

Meanwhile, in the sugary
chasms of our ports,

Indians fell, buried
in the morning steam:

a body rolls, something
nameless, a fallen number,

a bunch of dead fruits
scattered on the hill of rotting refuse.

Translated by Victoria Ortiz

with teachers, department heads, principals, school board members and local or state textbook adoption committees, urging educators to replace inadequate texts and/or use supplementary resources; and

4. That teachers hold classroom discussions about the portrayal of Central America in texts, newspapers and TV, using resources and information such as those provided in this *Bulletin* to initiate student analysis and criticism. □

Books in Study: Brief Reviews

Below are brief reviews of the materials analyzed for this report. They focus on the materials' suitability for teaching about Central America, and may not reflect the overall quality of a particular book. The material in quotations (unless it is a quote from the book under review) is taken from the reviewers' reports.

"Central America" in *Britannica Junior Encyclopaedia* (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1975).

This popular elementary and junior high reference gives a factual account of the geography, populations and work of the people living in Central America. It omits any discussion, however, of government, politics, culture or other forms of expression and does not deal at all with economic issues such as land reform or the history or causes of revolutionary movements. As a reference work, it is reasonable, although not as good as it could be.

"Central America" by Clarence W. Olmstead in *World Book Encyclopedia* (World Book-Childcraft International, Inc., 1978).

Widely available for elementary, junior and senior high school students, this encyclopedia has a very brief entry on Central America which focuses mainly on geography. Although accurate, its overemphasis on terrain seriously limits space for other vital topics. Omitted are the new status of Belize, the Panama Canal, political movements in several nations, the role of latifundia or foreign economic interests in Central America, the diversity among Central American people.

Central America: Lands Seeking Unity by Charles Paul May (Thomas Nelson, 1966).

This book for elementary school children is still widely available. It has chapters on each nation in the region, and its treatments of the early Mayan civilization and the Spanish conquest are adequate for young readers. Unfortunately, the book's assumptions, explanations and language are riddled with racial and ethnic stereotyping, simplistic and fear-mongering allusions to Communists and "Reds," and omissions of salient facts so that children will easily be misled about historical and current events in the area.

"Central America: Time of Turmoil" (*Junior Scholastic*, November 14, 1980).

This two-page feature on Central America (plus a two-page map) includes very brief descriptions of each country, current events and U.S. relations with them. There are many inaccuracies and misleading conclusions: revolution is always seen as bad for the U.S., the reasons for a revolution and the role of popular support are not analyzed; Cuba is bad *per se*; and Communism is presented as the "bogey" of the region. Also much of the information is dated: the U.S. is no longer aiding Nicaragua as the article states, nor is the ruling junta in El Salvador carrying out land reforms, as stated. Several loaded words or statements might mislead the reader (e.g., "Costa Rica is the only *democracy* in Central America," or why "did the U.S. *once* support unpopular dictators" there?). This article might be used as a basis for a short lesson on Central America *only* if the teacher can correct the inaccuracies and clarify the biases.

Chico of Guatemala by Betty Cavanna (Franklin Watts, 1963).

This story is about Chico, a Guatemalan boy who must leave home with his family in search of work when a volcano covers their land with ash. They wander for a year, getting poor jobs, suffering cold and hunger. While the story is intriguing and presents much factual information (about Indian clothes, coffee growing, lakes, volcanoes and markets), there is a complete lack of cultural, social, political or historical context to help children understand the problems faced or actions taken. Chico's family accepts all hardships without anger and with total resignation. The setting is rural, but the book gives the impression it is portraying an overview of the country, not just a piece. Many negative stereotypes of Indians show them as inferior, and often the pronunciations given for Spanish words are incorrect. The book could be used to raise human questions because of its strong story line of a poor family struggling to survive on the land, but the stereotypes must be countered.

El Salvador in Pictures by Nathan A. Harverstock and John P. Hoover (Sterling, 1976).

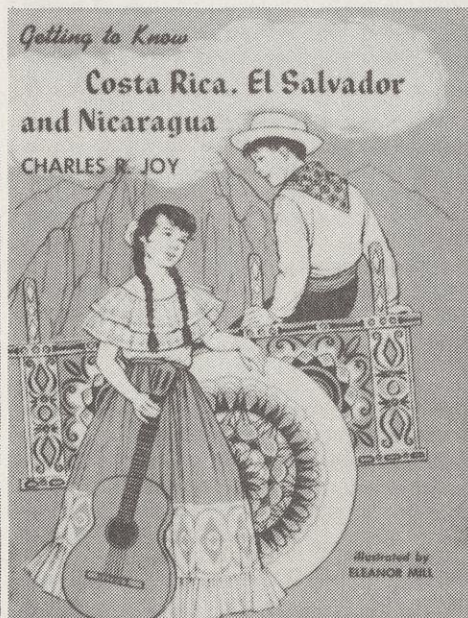
Part of a "visual geography series," this book is divided into five sections: the land, the history, the government, the people and the economy. While it provides many statistics and facts, it often moves into "explanations" which are serious distortions. For example, the book suggests that the country's underdevelopment is due to the "recalcitrance" of the people, who like their "backward" ways. It mentions only perfunctorily the pattern of land ownership and its effect on the population. The book "reinforces the worst views that most foreigners have of countries such as El Salvador."

Enchantment of Central America: Costa Rica by Allan Carpenter (Childrens Press, 1971).

One of a 20-volume series called "The Enchantment of South and Central America," this book briefly describes the geography, history and people of Costa Rica and includes descriptions of work and life. It includes short sketches of four children and families with very different lifestyles. (The four fathers are a banker, a wealthy rancher, a health inspector and a dock supervisor for a fruit company.) Although this book devotes several pages to "Distinguished Costa Ricans," it implies that the U.S. is "superior" to Costa Rica in many ways (e.g., all four children hope to study in the U.S. and it took an American to build a railroad through the jungle after 20 years of Costa Rican attempts). Although the book provides some interesting information, it is highly distorted.

Enchantment of Central America: Panama by Allan Carpenter (Childrens Press, 1971).

Another in the "Enchantment" series, this book on Panama has many of the same strengths and weaknesses of its counterpart on Costa Rica described above. It has facts about Panama's natural resources, holidays, geography and history and includes stories of three Panamanian children. However, the



Ignoring women's contributions to society, many books feature pictures of Central American women dressed as Spanish señoritas (the captions inevitably label them "girls"). Above left, a typical illustration of this type. Many books also trivialize Central American cultures by focusing on fiestas and other "exotica": witness the book cover at the right.

distortions in explaining historical and current events, the stereotypes of the people, the sexist language and the perpetuation of the myth that the U.S. is a benign, disinterested "helper" seriously mar this book's accuracy. If it is used at all, the distortions should be pointed out and supplemented with more up-to-date materials.

Getting to Know Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua by Charles R. Joy (Coward McCann, 1964).

Like many of the others in the large series of "Getting to Know" books, this one is filled with descriptive "facts" about the three countries it covers: volcanoes, soil, crops, trees, flowers, animals, insects, fish, gold, the conquistadors — all are included. This volume does not adequately deal with the social, historical or political contexts of any of the countries, and in fact treats them so generally that the child will not learn there are any major differences between Costa Rica, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Some important subjects (e.g., the role of Sandino in Nicaragua's history) are totally omitted, while others are described in terms that lead children to view the U.S. as naturally superior to Central America, "where gaiety and longing come alive together."

Getting to Know Guatemala and the Two Honduras by Grace Halsell (Coward McCann, 1964; re-issued as *Getting to Know Guatemala, Honduras and British Honduras* in 1971).

Most of this book is the narrative of an imagined trip. The text contains few facts beyond some very general history and culture. There are a few inaccuracies, but the major problem is that the text is too simplistic to inform readers of what life is like in any of these nations. Indians are stereotypically described; typical images of these countries as backward and inferior, with the U.S. as the helper nation, abound.

History and Life by T. Walter Wallbank et al. (Scott, Foresman, 1982).

This general history does not treat Central American cultures or societies separately, but mentions specific facts and themes as it discusses the history of the whole Latin American region. It contains several inaccuracies, and oversimplifies historical events. As a general reader, it is better than a lot of books, but "it is inadequate in scope or treatment."

Homelands of the World by Jack Abramovitz and Kenneth Job (Grove Book Company, 1977).

This is a social studies textbook for children in upper elementary school. The only mention of Central American nations are in charts showing what Latin American people do, and even then, only Panama is listed. A map showing the U.S., Mexico, Central and South America names all countries except those in Central America.

Honduras in Pictures by Ken Waddle (Sterling, 1976).

The text of this picture book covers the history, culture, geography and economics of

Honduras. While the facts presented are accurate, there are several distortions due to oversimplifications and omissions. Given the paucity of information about Honduras, the book is acceptable as a library reference, but not a text.

The Human Expression by Paul Thomas Welty (J.B. Lippincott Company, 1971).

This social studies textbook comes with a separate Teacher's Guide and an Activity Book for students. The entire package is recommended by one reviewer, who found no glaring factual inaccuracies on Central America although the text is too bland, a fair presentation of archeological and anthropological history of pre-Columbian Central America, and an analytical presentation of problems of the region as complex, caused by many factors needing complicated solutions. However, a few crucial topics escaped scrutiny (e.g., U.S. economic interests) and it is unfortunate that the specific region and its countries are subsumed into the category of Latin America.

Image of Guatemala (Organization of American States, 1972).

This promotional pamphlet has several strengths: it provides a good introduction to pre-Columbian history and achievements,

gives some basic history, and good information on current cultural achievements, folklore, landmarks, geography and terrain. The photos convey a variety of images. Guatemala is portrayed with pride, but this effort to present a positive image leads to serious omissions and distortions about the more problematic aspects of Guatemalan history, politics, economics and social life. Indigenous peoples are seen as "exotics" rather than in terms of inequality or oppression. The important role of the United Fruit Company is omitted, as are class and racial conflicts. "This book should be used in the classroom only if accompanied by materials or explanations indicating its limitations."

Insights: Latin America by Thomas Orin Flickema and Paul W. Kane (Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1980).

Presenting a general view of Latin America, this secondary text ignores Central America, mentioning it only half a dozen times and providing little specific information on the region. The book's strength is that each chapter presents one idea (e.g., politics, religion, family life, etc.) and develops it with interesting primary source materials, some of it through "Latin American eyes." Photos are balanced between rural/urban, upper/working classes,

Terminology and Race

Many of the books examined for the report beginning on page 3 exhibit an apparent fascination with the racial composition of Central American countries. Books devote many pages to a "breakdown" of the races found in specific countries and the region as a whole, concentrating on what percentage of the population is white, Indian, mestizo, Black, etc.

Of course, there is nothing wrong in discussing the racial and cultural composition of the countries individually or the region in general. On the contrary, books are dishonest when they fail to mention the racial and cultural components of a particular society. Outright biases aside, what is objectionable about many of these books is that they fail to present information in a context that will enable students to put questions of race into perspective. It is not, for instance, sufficient to know that X per cent of a particular society is Black, white, Indian or mestizo. What is significant is the role that the society assigns to the different groups. Are some groups excluded from the benefits of the society? Is one group dominant? How pluralistic is the society in apportioning its resources and social benefits?

In addition, a word must be said about terminology. The term mestizo (literally translated as "mixed") usually refers to people of Indian/Spanish ancestry; Ladino, with the same meaning, is used primarily in Guatemala. Although U.S. texts usually use these terms to refer only to a person's ancestry, they are in fact more accurately cultural and class descriptions. These terms are at best neutral; the danger lies in their misuse or in the negative connotations sometimes attached to the terms (compare the derogatory "half-breed" in the U.S.). Jack D. Forbes makes an interesting point in *Aztecas del Norte: The Chicanos of Aztlan* (Fawcett, 1973):

Today, virtually all of the peoples who are categorized as half-caste or mestizo live in zones where European imperialism has been active during the past several centuries (the South Pacific, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macao, Vietnam, India, Singapore, South Africa, and throughout [the Americas]).

Peoples categorized as "half-caste" or "mestizo" tend to have several characteristics in common: they reside in areas subjected to recent European colonialism and imperialism; they seldom possess the power or resources to determine their own destiny (either political or intellectual-psychological); their existence is usually a direct byproduct of European imperialism and colonial policy; and they are primarily people with both European and non-European ancestry, almost never with mixed European national backgrounds. (pp. 179-80)

diverse ethnic groups. However, without any attention to specific countries, there are many gross generalizations (e.g., "Latin Americans tend to enjoy life today and think about tomorrow when it comes," p. 45) that do not teach either facts or analysis. The book is also weak on student aids such as previews, reviews, quizzes and skill builders.

Telling It Like It Was?

"The day is not far distant when three Stars and Stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territory: one at the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal, and the third at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally. [The correct path of justice in U.S. foreign policy] may well be made to include active intervention to secure for our merchandise and our capitalists opportunity for profitable investment." —President William H. Taft, 1912.

"I spent thirty-three years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from a second lieutenant to major general. And during that period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street, and for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism. . . . Thus I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank to collect revenues in. . . . I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras 'right' for American fruit companies in 1903." —General Smedley D. Butler, 1935.

"I want history to record that I had no part in the giveaway of American property. From the very beginning we have caved in to threats from tinhorn dictators." —Representative Floyd Spence, Republican, South Carolina, during 1978 Senate debate over withdrawal of U.S. troops from Panama and granting of sovereignty of Panama Canal.

"It's ours; we stole it fair and square." —Ronald Reagan, 1976.

Land and People: A World Geography by Gerald A. Danzer and Albert J. Larson (Scott, Foresman, 1982).

This new text contains little information on Central America. It totally omits mention of Nicaragua, Costa Rica or Belize; it oversimplifies and misleads readers about the causes of various problems; and the text and photos reinforce stereotypes of indigenous people in Guatemala and Mexico. In addition, the book is, in most cases, dry; it does not support problem solving, group or individual activities; it does not deal honestly and openly with the rape of natural resources; and it omits real dealings with Central America.

Land and People of Central America by Ruth Karen (J.B. Lippincott Company, 1965, revised 1972).

This simply written book for elementary and junior high contains information on Central American nations, each in its own chapter, from the perspective of a traveler. However, there are no good maps or geographic presentations. Further, the text contains many unsubstantiated opinions, gross oversimplifications, insulting stereotypes and out-of-date information. There are no explanations of economics, politics or the people of the area.

Lands of Latin America by the Education Research Council of America (Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1976).

Focusing on Latin America and Mexico, this social studies text almost totally ignores Central America and the Caribbean. What it presents about the region generally is out of date and biased. Illustrations overemphasize indigenous people, rural life and poverty. While there are undoubtedly worse texts, this one — despite a liberal veneer — reinforces many stereotypes.

Let's Visit Central America by John C. Caldwell (John Day, 1964).

One of a series for upper elementary children on various countries and regions, this book has sections on history, geography, religion, food, schools, holidays, sports, industry and language. There are separate sections on each country and one on Central America and the U.S. The book neglects the everyday lives of people and the politics that shape their societies. In addition, some information is out of date. The one-sided, totally rosy picture of U.S. involvement in Central America reads like U.S. government propaganda.

Mexico, Central America, and the West Indies by Robert Clayton (John Day, 1971).

This book's strength is in portraying Middle America's diversity and its physical and natural environment. The maps and photos are generally good for introducing the area, its geography and people. Its weaknesses, however, are many: social and political conditions are distorted and oversimplified; cultural heritages are superficially presented; data is often outdated; and among many stereotypes, it implicitly conveys the notion that white people are naturally superior to Blacks. These weaknesses "make it highly misleading and

unsatisfactory for use by teachers or school systems."

Nicaragua in Pictures by Nathan A. Haverstock and John P. Hoover (Sterling, 1974).

This slim volume from a large series gives basic information about Nicaragua's geography, climate, vegetation, history, people and economy. It provides a fair view of Nicaragua's early history and includes Nicaraguan perspectives about some events. However, its treatment of more recent history is flawed. For example, it inaccurately describes the National Guard under former president Somoza as being "as much a friend of the citizen as it is of the ruler." Suitable for teaching about Nicaragua's early history and geography, the book must be supplemented for teaching about the people and modern history.

Our World and Its People by Edward R. Kolvzon and John A. Heine (Allyn & Bacon, 1981).

This text tries to cover all regions of the world and is organized around topics such as "The United States — Our Nation" and "Our Neighbors to the South — Latin America." Its interdisciplinary view seriously limits the range of facts and analyses presented, as does the fragmentation of material about Latin America into categories such as products, landowners, etc. History is presented as anecdotes; governments are simplistically described as unstable and undemocratic; the U.S. is portrayed as friendly and superior to Latin America. Very little space is given to Central America. "The material presented in no way prepares the student for an analytical study of the region."

Panama and the Canal Zone in Pictures by Peter English (Sterling, 1976).

This volume from a popular series contains many biases and distortions. It characterizes the U.S. as the "benevolent helper" aiding the "backward" people of Panama who "need" the U.S. to do such things as run the canal for them because of their "lack of skills, money and military force." The emphasis is on the picturesque: the gracious architecture and lifestyle of a "bygone era," the lush and "exotic" countryside, and the "primitive, but charming" people in rural areas. The book fails to meet its stated goal of helping "student, tourist, and armchair traveller to comprehend both the achievements and unresolved problems relating to this small but vital Latin American nation."

A People and a Nation by Clarence L. Ver Steeg and Richard Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1981).

This widely used high school history text tries to give a balanced view of American foreign policy, but it contains many worn shibboleths and stereotypes and does not deal in sufficient depth with Central America. Although recently revised, it does not deal with the 1977 Panama Treaty, nor give due treatment to U.S. economic interests in and political stands toward Central American nations. Instead, it

repeats the standard explanations for the Hoover policy of non-intervention, the Good Neighbor policy, the Alliance for Progress, etc. without sufficient information or analyses of these and more current policies.

The Western Hemisphere by Harold D. Drummond (Allyn & Bacon, 1978).

This social studies text is best when it deals with geography. Illustrations show a variety of economic activities. Its presentation of indigenous people is weak, but at least does not reinforce particular stereotypes. The book's major weaknesses stem from its omissions and biases in explaining social, political and economic events in Central America: U.S. and corporate interests are always portrayed as benevolent; exploitation or inequities are not discussed; the U.S. is the standard for judging Central American countries, which rarely measure up. The text is dry. This book "could be used with more updated contemporary materials."

World Cultures by Clarence L. Ver Steeg (Scott, Foresman, 1977).

This general social studies text is divided into six general topics: developing values, family, meeting human wants, etc. Brief examples are so short that students cannot gain any real understanding of how any one society really works. Guatemala is the only Central American nation mentioned, and the example is likely to teach that Indians there are lazy, uninterested in the world around them and inferior. The material is outdated, even within the book's narrow context, and presents an erroneous view of Indian life.

World Geography by Alan Backler and Stuart Lazarus (Science Research Associates, 1980).

This high school geography text covers all regions. Central America, however, is given no specific mention, and all of Latin America is covered in only 20 pages.

World Geography Today by Saul Israel et al. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980).

Aimed at early secondary school grades, this text deals with all world regions; its treatment of Central America is brief. Eight pages of general information on Latin America are followed by ten pages for both Mexico and Central America. Each Central American country gets an average of three paragraphs on geography and basic political and economic facts. Although a good geography skills activity is suggested, the text is plagued with inaccuracies and oversimplifications. "There is not enough substantive material to form any basis for understanding Central America."

World History by Bertram L. Linder et al. (Science Research Associates, 1979).

This book emphasizes historical concepts (such as independence and revolution). Regions are used only as illustrations (e.g., England in terms of industrialization), so that the history of particular areas, including Central America, is precluded. In addition to many se-



Textbooks' politics are often clear from the captions; the illustration above in Central America: Lands Seeking Unity is captioned, "Indian pickers work long hours when the coffee crop is ripe, so they are a target for communistic and nationalistic agitators." It will be interesting to see how future texts depict the recent changes in Nicaragua; below, young people who took part in that country's Literacy Campaign. (Photo: Larry Boyd/LNS)



rious distortions arising from oversimplifications of events, there are also biases in favor of the U.S. and Europe which skew the quantity and quality of information. Students may find the book fun since it combines fact and concepts with historical anecdotes, but the material prevents critical thinking.

U.S. History Texts Examined

The 31 U.S. history texts listed below were checked for their coverage of Central America. Seven of these texts do not even mention Central America. Fifteen texts limit coverage of Central America to the building of the Panama Canal, and most of these books either ignore or mention only in passing the U.S. military intervention that led to the acquisition of the Canal. Only three texts give explanatory information.

Only four of the texts refer to any other U.S. intervention in Central America; mention is limited to U.S. military support of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua and/or to CIA participation in the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala, and these references are at best minimal. Not one of the 31 texts discusses the continuing involvement of the U.S. government—sometimes overt, some-

times covert—in Central America.

America: In Space and Time by Bryan Strong (Addison-Wesley, 1976).

America: Its People and Values by Leonard C. Wood et al. (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

American Dream by Lew Smith (Scott, Foresman, 1977).

American History by Jack Abramowitz (Follett, 1975).

American Nation: Adventure in Freedom by Jack Abramowitz (Follett, 1975).

The American Pageant: A History of a Republic by Thomas A. Bailey and David M. Kennedy (D.C. Heath, 1979).

American Studies by Irving L. Gordon (Amsco School Publications, 1977).

Americans: A History of the United States by Social Studies Curriculum Center, Carnegie-Mellon University (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975).

As It Happened: A History of the United States by Charles G. Sellers (McGraw-Hill, 1975).

The Challenge of America by Mitchell Okun and Stephen H. Bronz (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

Episodes in American History by Boyd C. Burns et al. (Ginn, 1973).

Free and the Brave by Henry F. Graff (Rand McNally, 1980).

Freedom's Trail by Richard A. Bartlett et al. (Houghton Mifflin, 1979).

History of the American People by James I. Clark (McDougal, Littell, 1975).

In Search of America by Martin W. Sandler (Ginn, 1975).

Land of Challenge by Margaret Stimmann Branson (Ginn, 1975).

Land of Progress by Unger Johnson and H. Mark Johnson (Ginn, 1975).

Land of the Free: A History of the United States by John W. Caughey et al. (Benziger, 1971).

Man in America by Joseph H. Dempsey (Silver Burdett, 1974).

The New Exploring American History by Melvin Schwartz and John R. O'Connor (Globe Book Co., 1978).

Pageant of American History by Gerald Leinwand (Allyn & Bacon, 1975).

A People and a Nation by Clarence L. Ver Steeg and Richard Hofstadter (Harper & Row, 1981).

People and Our Country by Norman K. Risjord and Terry L. Haywoode (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978).

People Make a Nation by Martin W. Sandler et al. (Allyn & Bacon, 1975).

People's Heritage by Curtis B. Solberg and David W. Morris (John Wiley, 1975).

Promise and Performance of American Democracy by Richard A. Watson (John Wiley, 1978).

Rise of the American Nation by Lewis Paul Todd and Merle Curti (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

Two Centuries of Progress: United States History by Harold H. Eibling et al. (Laidlaw Brothers, 1977).

United States History for High Schools by Boyd C. Shaffer et al. (Laidlaw Brothers, 1977).

United States History: Search for Freedom by Richard N. Current et al. (Scott, Foresman, 1977).

We the People by David B. Bidna et al. (D.C. Heath, 1977).

Other Books Examined

The Boy with the Parrot by Elizabeth Coatsworth (Macmillan, 1954).

Costa Rica in Pictures by Sandra Sawicki (Sterling, 1974).

Enchantment of Central America: El Salvador by Allan Carpenter and Eloise Baker (Childrens Press, 1971).

Enchantment of Central America: Nicaragua by Allan Carpenter and Tom Balow (Childrens Press, 1971).

Image of . . . series prepared and published by the Organization of American States: *Image of Costa Rica* (1973); *Image of Guatemala* (1972); *Image of El Salvador* (n.d.); *Image of Panama* (1971).

Magic Maize by Mary and Conrad Buff (Houghton Mifflin, 1953).

Pirates in Panama by F.N. Monjo (Simon & Schuster, 1970).

Our thanks go to the reviewers who evaluated the books for the study that begins on page 3. Members of the reviewing panel were Bert Bower, high school bilingual teacher, Los Altos, California, curriculum developer, Project REAL (Stanford University's curriculum development program for Latin America); Jeffrey Cabot, teacher-trainer and curriculum writer, Bureau of Social Studies, New York City Public Schools, specializing in American history and Latin American area studies; Carol Chaet, chairperson, Social Studies Department, Cambridge (Mass.) public high schools, member, program committee for 1982 annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies; Carlos Cortés, Professor of Latin American History, University of California at Riverside; Margaret E. Crahan, Professor of History, Herbert Lehman College, City University of New York, Director, Human Rights Project, Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University; Richart Feinberg, Visiting Fellow, Overseas Development Council, Washington, D.C., former member, policy planning staff, Department of State, specializing in Latin America; Sherry Keith, Program Officer on Latin America, Division of Education, World Bank, former director of Project REAL, Latin American curriculum development center, Stanford University; Robert Kessler, history teacher, Moraga School District, California, developed secondary school curriculum on Central America, co-author of children's book on Vietnam; William Leo Grande, Director of Political Science, School of Government and Public Administration, American University, scholar on Latin America, with specialization in Central America and the Caribbean; Dan Mugan, high school social studies teacher, New York City Public Schools, President, Association for Teachers of Latin American Studies, former director, Fulbright-Hays Teacher Seminars in Mexico and Chile; Victoria Ortiz, high school Spanish teacher, New York City, author of *The Land and People of Cuba*, collaborator, Women's International Resource Exchange; Aracelly Santana, Associate Researcher, North American Congress on Latin America, political economist with specialization in Latin American development; Steve Stern, Visiting Professor, Yale University, Assistant Professor of History, University of Wisconsin, and scholar on Latin American history; Dinah Volk, Instructor and Project Associate, Bilingual Program, Bank Street College of Education, former elementary school and day-care teacher, New York City Public Schools and Santiago, Chile.

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Facts and figures to understand Central America past and present and to indicate the type of information missing from almost all student materials

Profiles of Central America

American Indians have lived in Central America for at least 200 centuries. Indigenous groups in Middle America — which includes the southern two-thirds of Mexico as well as Central America — developed agriculture, writing systems, monumental architecture, metallurgy and accurate systems of astronomical observation. While there is some question as to whether the early peoples of Middle America had contact with the so-called “Old World,” there is no doubt that the high civilizations in the region developed quite independently of any such contact.

The Maya civilization, centered in what is now Guatemala and with roots in the earliest cultures (including the Olmec), flourished from about 300 B.C. to 900 A.D. No remains of this civilization dating from later than approximately 900 A.D. have been found, and the cause of its “disappearance” is a much discussed mystery. In any case, the writing system, the language and core of the Maya civilization continued. (The Maya language, in fact, continues in the Yucatan to this day.)

Another of the widespread cultural influences in the area was that of the Nahuatl-speaking group (Toltecs) who came from the central highlands of Mexico, in some cases as conquerors but more often as traders who formed enclaves of Nahuatl speakers, particularly in the southern regions of Middle America. Academic and literary attention has focused on the area’s “high” cultures (particularly the Maya), giving an inaccurate picture of the cultures that have been — and are — in the area. There have in fact been numerous other indigenous civilizations in the area.

Europeans began arriving in Middle America at the end of the 15th century; Columbus, for instance, arrived on the

northern coast of what is now Honduras in 1502. Spurred in part by tales of gold-filled lands, an invasion of Spanish conquerors soon began in earnest. Their efforts to subdue the indigenous peoples led to the decimation of the native population and to the destruction of most written records of the early civilizations. Despite the genocidal oppression of the indigenous peoples — which continues today — there are more Indian peoples in Middle America than anywhere else in the world.

From approximately 1520 until 1821, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica were provinces of the Spanish empire. During that period, land was distributed to the conquistadors under the *encomienda* system that exacted tributary labor from the Indians in return for “protection” from the owner. In 1821 the provinces declared their independence from Spain and formed the United Provinces of Central America, a federation which permitted a great deal of state autonomy.

The leaders of the federation were imbued with the same ideals that sparked revolutions in other parts of the world. The federation abolished slavery, freed Indians of forced tribute, did away with many of the special privileges and power that Spain had granted to nobles and clergy, and introduced universal public education. Conflict between Conservatives — who wanted to retain the rigid social structure of the old Spanish rule — and Liberals — who called for more extensive social and economic reforms — resulted in the breakup of the federation in 1842.

Traditionally and culturally, Central America consists of the five nations that were in the federation — Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and

Nicaragua. Geographically, two additional countries are a part of Central America: One is Panama, detached early in the 20th century from the South American nation of Colombia due to U.S. intervention in connection with the building of the Panama Canal; the second is Belize, until recently a British colony (British Honduras). In addition, the Mexican state of Chiapas, annexed from Guatemala shortly after independence from Spain, is sometimes considered a part of Central America.

The population of Central America — approximately 17 million people — traces its ancestry to Indian, African and Spanish sources, but each country has its own racial and cultural composition. The largest population of Indians who maintain an Indian language and culture is in Guatemala. Most of the peoples of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras are mestizos, i.e. of Indian/Spanish origin (for a discussion of this term see box on page 9). There are also people of African ancestry along the Caribbean coasts of several Central American nations; they are descendants of slaves or of free Blacks who migrated from Jamaica in search of work. The dominant language of the area is Spanish, although numerous Indian languages are spoken, as is English, particularly by those people of African ancestry along the Caribbean coast.

Approximately 70 per cent of the people of Central America live in rural areas. The majority are peasants who eke out a meager subsistence by growing corn, rice, beans and other basic crops on small plots of land. Many others own no land at all and must migrate from one province to another to harvest the cash crops grown by the large landowners. A large part of the rural population is unemployed except at harvest time, when

they are paid less than subsistence wages. This oppressive system, in which a very tiny percentage of the population owns vast amounts of the most fertile lands while the majority have little or no access to land, is characteristic of all the countries in Central America. It remains one of the root causes of poverty and political turmoil in Central America. Only in Nicaragua, since 1979, has there been a serious attempt to redistribute land to the poor.

Despite the fertility of the land in Central America, and the fact that most of these countries (with the significant exception of El Salvador) have rather small populations relative to land area, malnutrition and hunger are endemic. The large plantations, called *latifundios*, grow cash crops — coffee, bananas, sugar, for example — for export to the U.S. and Europe; basic foods must be imported.

In some Central American countries, particularly Honduras and Guatemala, the problem of unequal distribution of land has been compounded by the presence of foreign (primarily U.S.) corporations. These corporations use their immense tracts of land to grow cash crops for export and exert great influence over the internal political affairs of each country. Indeed, crucial to an understanding of the region is the role played by the U.S. government in supporting these corporate interests — often by direct intervention. In addition, more often than not, the huge profits earned by the corporations do not stay in Central America to further the development of that region.

In the past 20 years, Central America has also become an attractive area for foreign investors in light industry. The large numbers of rural workers who migrate to the cities in search of work create a large pool of cheap labor. Local government tax incentives have also attracted industries eager to avoid the high taxes, union wage scales, etc. in the U.S. Guatemala and El Salvador are the most industrialized countries in Central America, but current political unrest in both countries is sparking an exodus of foreign investors seeking a “stable” investment climate.

With the exception of Costa Rica, which has no standing army, the armed forces of the Central American nations have generally supported the interests of both domestic and foreign landowners and industrialists, inhibiting the growth of labor unions and moving forcefully — and sometimes brutally — against strikes and protests. Until very recently, the armies of Central America succeeded in preventing the growth of strong opposition parties and grassroots movements. They have used electoral fraud, political maneuvering, widespread repression and ruthless killing to keep themselves — or pliable civilian officeholders — in power. A shortsighted policy on the part of the U.S. government has provided aid, both military and economic, to such governments since at least the 1950s.

Today, Central America is a region of great political unrest, an “isthmus of crisis” that makes headlines almost daily with coups and countercoups, guerrilla

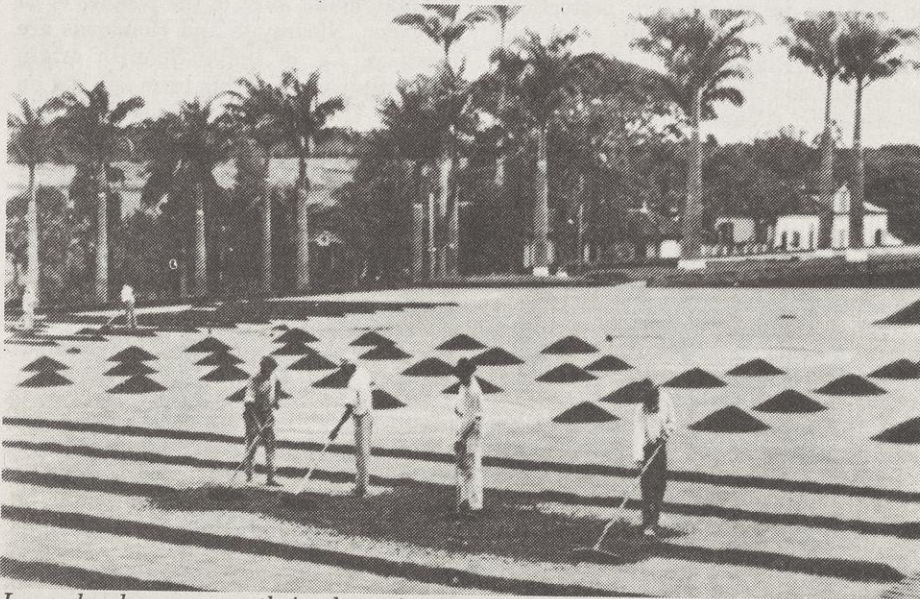
warfare and widespread abuses of human rights. While many people attribute this unrest to the work of “outside agitators” and “external subversion,” the growth of strong opposition movements in El Salvador and Guatemala and the recent triumph of a revolutionary movement in Nicaragua can more convincingly be traced to the poverty and persecution suffered by the people of Central America for so many years.

We have prepared mini-histories of four Central American nations to indicate directions teachers might go in order to counteract textbook and media bias. Information on El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua appears below. We urge that students develop similar mini-histories for Belize, Costa Rica and Panama. Sources for additional information appear on pages 31-32.

EL SALVADOR

Area: 8,260 sq. mi. (about the size of Massachusetts); **population:** 4,750,000 (1981 est.); **density:** 575 people/sq. mi.; **urban:** 38.8%; **racial makeup:** 90% mestizo, 5% Indian, 5% white; **language:** Spanish; **capital:** San Salvador; **chief exports:** coffee, cotton, sugar; **GNP:** \$3.77 billion (1980); **per capita income:** \$639 (1980); **per capita arable land:** .3 acres; **labor force breakdown:** 51% agriculture, 22% industry, 46% service; **unemployment:** 35% (official rate; International Labor Organization reports 50%), only 16% have permanent jobs; **literacy rate:** 63% (much lower in rural areas); **teachers:** 11/1,000 people; **population with access to safe water:** 53%; **people per doctor:** 3,600; **life expectancy:** 63 years; **infant mortality rate:** 60 per 1,000 live births; **child deaths** (age one-four): 8 per 1,000 live births; **income distribution:** 8% of population earns 50% of national income; **land distribution:** 2% of population owns 57.5% of land, 60% of rural peasants are landless; **nutrition:** 75% of children under five are malnourished; El Salvador has the lowest per capita consumption of calories in Latin America.

During the colonial period, the economy of El Salvador was based largely on diversified subsistence agriculture, but beginning in the mid-19th century, land became concentrated in fewer and fewer hands and devoted to the production of cash export crops. In 1881, a “land reform” act took away the common lands — the *ejidos* — of the Indian peoples and turned them over to large landowners for



Large landowners use their plantations to grow cash crops for export (above, coffee beans being spread out to dry); basic foods must be imported and malnutrition and hunger are widespread.

the production of coffee and later cotton and sugar for the world market. Between 1860 and 1890, half the land in El Salvador was turned into private property; income became increasingly unequal.

The country's wealth came under the ownership of an oligarchy of "The Fourteen Families" (grown today to some 200 families with interests in agriculture, industry and banking). This oligarchy ran the government and conducted the country's affairs in ways that promoted their own interests. Discontent among students and intellectuals in the cities and peasants in the country, particularly the Indians whose communal lands had been forcibly taken from them, set the stage for the election in 1931 of the reform candidate Alberto Araujo. He was overthrown by the military after less than one year in office. Then followed the 1932 peasant and worker uprising, which took the lives of 100 landowners and officials. The uprising occurred only in scattered villages and lasted barely three days; in revenge, the oligarchy and military carried out brutal reprisals, the infamous *La Matanza* (the slaughter), in which 30,000 peasants were massacred by the military *after* the rebellion was put down.

With *La Matanza*, the military crushed the rising worker and peasant movements and consolidated a grip on the country that it has never released. A pattern emerged whereby elections — often fraudulent — were held periodically to legitimize military rule. In turn, the military protected the interests of the landowning and business elite.

The military's strong grip made for a "stable investment climate," which, coupled with tax incentives and abundant cheap labor, was attractive to foreign investors. During the 1950s and 1960s, more than 50 multinationals, mostly U.S.-based, opened operations in El Salvador.

In 1968 the government set up ORDEN, a right-wing paramilitary group with approximately 50,000 members, funded directly by the president's office and operated by the Ministry of Defense and Public Security. Its mandate was to preach "anti-communism" to the Salvadoran working classes and to be "the eyes and ears of the army in the countryside." (Although ORDEN was officially disbanded in 1979, it is widely believed that its former leaders head the death squads that are responsible for a large majority of the brutal murders currently taking place in El Salvador.)

In the early 1970s, intellectual and middle-class sectors joined to challenge the ruling elite. Napoleón Duarte was elected president on a progressive platform in 1972, but the military prevented him from taking office. Duarte was exiled until 1979, when he returned (with U.S. support) to share power with the same army that had denied him victory in 1972.

After another overtly fraudulent election in 1977 failed to provide a peaceful vehicle for reform, many Salvadorans turned to civil disobedience to make their demands heard. Farmworkers and peasants, factory workers and school teachers, market women and clergy — all joined together in what has become known as the "popular organizations." These organizations staged sit-ins and street demonstrations, demanding higher wages and basic services such as running water and sewage in the slum communities. But the government's reaction was ever greater and more brutal repression; increasingly, Salvadorans turned to the guerrilla movement to provide protection from the army and an end to military rule. (See also pp. 19-21.)

The defeat of the Nicaraguan dictator, Somoza, in 1979 raised fears within the Salvadoran army that it would suffer a similar fate. In October 1979, therefore, a small group of young military officers

overthrew the ruling general and installed a civilian-military junta. While many had high hopes that this government would institute reforms and civilian rule in El Salvador, those hopes were dashed when the repression continued, when reforms were sabotaged by the oligarchy, by right-wing death squads and by the army, and when civilian members of the new junta resigned in frustration. El Salvador today is the scene of a bloody civil war, in which the U.S. government is sending large amounts of military aid to support the Salvadoran army in its war against the guerrillas and the popular organizations.

On March 28, 1982, Salvadorans were given a narrow range of choices in elections carried out under pressure from the U.S. A Constituent Assembly was elected with power shared by extreme right-wing political parties and the Salvadoran army. Roberto D'Aubuisson, described by an ex-U.S. ambassador to El Salvador as a "pathological killer," was elected president of this assembly. A Salvadoran banker, Alvaro Alfredo Magaña, was named provisional president.

GUATEMALA

Area: 42,042 sq. mi. (about the size of Tennessee); **population:** 7,470,000 (1981 est.); **density:** 177 people/sq. mi.; **urban:** 35.6% (1975); **racial makeup:** 54% Indian, 42% mestizo (Ladino), 4% other (Black, white, Asian); **languages:** Spanish, 22 Indian (Mayan) languages, some English on the Atlantic coast; **capital:** Guatemala City; **chief exports:** coffee, cotton, fruit, meat, sugar; **GNP:** \$6.9 billion (1979); **per capita income:** \$749; **per capita arable land:** .5 acres; **labor force breakdown:** 56% agriculture, 21% industry, 23% service; **unemployment:** 34.3% of active labor force (1980); **literacy rate:** 47% (1977)—Ladinos 55%, Indians 15%; **teachers:** 11/1,000 (1977); **population with access to safe water:** 40%; **people per doctor:** 2,490; **life expectancy:** 57 years; **infant mortality rate:** 82.9 per 1,000 live births; **child deaths** (age one-four): 13 per 1,000 live births (1979); **income distribution:** top 5% received 59% of national income in 1978; poorest 50% received 7% of national income in 1978 (in 1950, the figures were 48% and 7%, meaning the rich/poor gap has increased); **other indicators of worsening conditions:** population receiving less than minimum daily calorie consumption — 1965: 42%, 1975: 70%, 1980: 80%; population under 5 years old with

UNITED STATES

(for purposes of comparison)

Population: 226,504,825 (1980 census); **density:** 62.3 people/sq. mi.; **urban:** 73.5%; **racial makeup:** 83.2% white, 11.7% Black, 5.2% other; **GNP:** \$2,350 billion; **per capita income:** \$8,612 (1978); **per capita arable land:** 2.1 acres; **labor force breakdown:** 2% agriculture, 32% industry, 66% service; **unemployment:** 9% (1982) government figures; **literacy rate:** 99%; **teachers:** 43/1,000 people; **population with access to safe water:** 100%; **people per doctor:** 590; **life expectancy:** 74 years; **infant mortality rate:** 14 per 1,000 live births; **child deaths** (age one-four): 1 per 1,000 live births; **income distribution** (1972): top 10% of population received 26.6% of national income, poorest 20% of population received 4.5% of national income, poorest 40% of population received 15.2% of national income, poorest 60% of population received 33% of national income.

nutritional problems—1970: 75%, 1980: 82%.

Guatemala, the first country to secede from the United Provinces of Central America, left the federation in 1838. Its first government restored many of the special privileges that the landowners and clergy had lost during the years of federation. For the next century, Guatemala was ruled by a series of dictators who followed an economic policy that served the financial interests of foreign corporations and sold vast tracts of land for coffee and banana production, primarily for export. By far the largest landowner was the Boston-based United Fruit Company, and it operated as a state within a state, taking over ports and setting up its own customs and police.

In the 1940s, protests against social and economic injustice ushered in a decade of reform led by students and teachers. In 1944, allied with young military officers, they forced the resignation of Jorge Ubico and set up free elections. The winning candidate was a school teacher, Juan José Arévalo, whose government instituted education and labor reforms. It failed, however, to address Guatemala's central problem: that masses of fertile land lay fallow because owners like United Fruit were holding them "in reserve" for possible future use even as there existed widespread shortages of basic foodstuff. (Less than 10 per cent of the lands owned by United Fruit were under cultivation.)

Reforms continued after another democratic election in 1950 when Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán won the presidency with 63 per cent of the vote. His government built highways and a port to break United Fruit's monopoly of transport and export. Arbenz also innovated an agrarian reform program to give Guatemalan peasants access to land, with low-interest loans to help them develop it. By 1954, over 100,000 families had benefited. Even though the law affected only idle lands and paid United Fruit and other corporations for expropriated property at rates of evaluations they themselves had set, the U.S. State Department and CIA intervened on United Fruit's behalf in 1954.

The U.S. set in motion a major propaganda drive to label the Arbenz reforms "communist-inspired" and to charge that Guatemala was in danger of becoming a base for "international communism." Next the CIA equipped Colonel Castillo Armas, a graduate of the Fort Leaven-

worth military post, with a "Liberation Army" of mercenaries and U.S.-piloted F-47 bombers to undertake an invasion of Guatemala from neighboring Honduras. After U.S. pilots strafed the National Palace, Arbenz resigned, whereupon Castillo Armas was flown in from Honduras on a U.S. embassy plane to assume the presidency.

The full extent of CIA participation in the Arbenz overthrow has only recently been revealed, but U.S. involvement has been well documented for many years. In 1961, for example, the U.S. Ambassador to Honduras testified before a Senate subcommittee that he and the U.S. ambassadors to Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica had been part of a team that masterminded the Arbenz overthrow. Two years later, *Newsweek* (March 4, 1963) described a White House meeting which "reviewed the Central Intelligence Agency's plans for toppling the regime of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán." Those present included Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, Secretary of Defense Charles E. Wilson, CIA Director Allen Dulles, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Eisenhower had admonished the group: "I want all of you to be damn good and sure you succeed" and "When you commit the flag, you commit it to win." (For additional information on U.S.-United Fruit ties, see the footnote on pp. 4-5.)

Castillo Armas rescinded the Arbenz reform laws and returned all the property of United Fruit and other corporations. Since then, wealth has become still more concentrated in the hands of an ever-smaller group, and the poverty of the peasants and workers has increased.

The overthrow of Arbenz set off a series of dictatorships that maintained power by genocidal repression. In 1960 there was an uprising in the Guatemalan army, and a segment broke away to join a fledgling guerrilla movement that sought once again to institute reforms. Protests continued to grow. In response a U.S.-funded counter-insurgency campaign called Operation Guatemala was launched in 1970. It took the lives of an estimated 18,000 Guatemalans within three years and put a temporary stop to the fighting. With the defeat of the guerrillas, U.S. investments in Guatemala increased rapidly, but they leveled off in the late 1970s when the guerrilla movement began again.

In March, 1982, a military coup toppled the government of General Romero Lucas García, who was charged by Catholic church sources with the tor-

ture and murder of over 10,000 peasants, student leaders, journalists and opposition party leaders. (Because of flagrant human rights violations, the U.S. has denied aid to Guatemala since 1977, but the Reagan administration is now seeking to renew direct military aid to the current government, which is run by a three-man military junta.)

HONDURAS

Area: 43,277 sq. mi. (slightly larger than Tennessee); **population:** 3,825,000 (1981 est.); **density:** 85.4 people/sq. mi.; **urban:** 31.4% (1974); **racial makeup:** 90% mestizo, 6% Indian, 2% Black, 1% white; **languages:** Spanish, English on Atlantic coast; **capital:** Tegucigalpa; **chief exports:** bananas, coffee, cotton, lumber, meat, sugar; **GNP:** \$2.55 billion; **per capita income:** \$528; **per capita arable land:** .5 acres; **labor force breakdown:** 63% agriculture, 22% industry, 27% service; **literacy rate:** 57%; **teachers:** 14/1,000 people; **population with access to safe water:** 46%; **people per doctor:** 3,420; **life expectancy:** 57 years; **infant mortality rate:** 33.6 per 1,000 live births; **child deaths** (age one-four): 14 per 1,000 (1979); **income distribution** (1967): top 10% received 50% of national income, poorest 20% received 2.3% of national income, poorest 40% received 7.3% of national income, poorest 60% received 15.3% of national income.

The history of Honduras differs significantly from that of its neighbors. In most Central American nations, oligarchies arose in the late 19th or early 20th centuries and in time worked with foreign corporations for their mutual profit. In Honduras, the foreign corporations, not an oligarchy, first became the predominant force.

Starting in the late 1800s, foreign fruit companies began to acquire the bulk of the rich Caribbean coastal land in the north for use as banana plantations. By 1910, 80 per cent of all Honduran banana plantations were controlled by U.S. firms. By 1914, United Fruit and four other corporations owned more than a million acres, much of it the most fertile land in Honduras. To work the plantations, fruit companies brought large numbers of Blacks from nearby Caribbean islands. They also invested considerable sums of money to gain the loyalty of Honduras' government officials.

In obtaining land, United Fruit promised to lay an extensive railway network,

which would help the country by unifying its scattered settlements. It also promised that the railway would revert to the government if United Fruit ever ceased operating it. The extent of the railway that was finally built fell far short of the original agreement, and when a fungus disease ruined vast areas for banana planting in the 1930s, United Fruit ripped up much of the railway and shipped tracks and even bridges out of the country. Today, Honduras has a scanty 120 miles of public-service railroads, while the fruit companies have 520 miles of their own railways in the north coast banana region.

Diversification of the economy, principally to coffee, cotton and cattle, began in the 1950s and produced the country's first true oligarchy. At the same time, foreign investments, mostly by U.S. firms, increased. Over 70 per cent of Honduras' largest firms were established in the 1950s and 1960s, and U.S. multinationals controlled 100 per cent of the five largest firms and over 80 per cent of the 50 largest firms.

Meanwhile, the population — quite low in comparison to neighboring countries in the early 1900s — was expanding dramatically. By 1950 there were four times as many Hondurans as there had been in 1887, and the population doubled between 1950 and 1975. As commercialization of agriculture increased, so did the value of land, and the small Honduran oligarchy became entrenched. This oligarchy, along with the multinationals, invested in some industry, but that, too, was geared to an export market, and did not meet the steadily mounting need of Hondurans for employment.

A major strike in 1954 forced concessions from United Fruit, not the least significant being recognition of labor's right to have unions. Demonstrations and land seizures of unused lands by peasants accelerated during the 1960s. The fruit companies began returning some of the land to the government, which passed it on to peasant cooperatives. However, the companies didn't surrender very much land (in 1970 United Fruit and Standard Fruit still controlled 70 per cent of all banana lands), and they maintained their dominance by setting prices and controlling markets.

Similar changes are occurring in other Central American nations as the multinationals realize that they can make greater profits by controlling the marketing of the fruits rather than owning the land. Far better, their reasoning goes, to let the peasant associations cope with the



Because of their large landholdings and their control of the banana industry and other crops, foreign companies (particularly the U.S.-based United Fruit) have greatly influenced Central American nations.

headaches of irrigation, flood control, hurricanes, etc.; they can be content to step in at the profitable stage.

The military has always played a role in Honduran politics. Its power was reduced in the 1950s when a civilian government ended the army's traditional privilege of supervising elections. But a new constitution in 1957 gave the chief of the armed forces the right to contest the orders of the president, and still another constitution in 1965 exempted the armed forces from civilian governmental control. Military rule continued until the November 1981 election brought in a civilian government.

Opposition to military rule has come mainly from labor federations representing some 100,000 peasants and workers. Although violence and repression in Honduras have been on a somewhat lower level than in neighboring countries, this is due more to a relatively weak oligarchy than to a lack of opposition forces. The Honduran peasant movement, in fact, is one of the strongest in all of Central America. Through repeated land seizures and demonstrations, it forced the government to institute agrarian reform laws, even though successive regimes have preferred to ignore these measures. In recent years the government has stepped up its anti-labor activities with the arrest and murder of peasant leaders. Equally as ominous is the stepped-up U.S. military support to the Honduran government. During 1978-

80, Honduras received more U.S. aid than any other Central American nation. In 1981-82, the U.S. reduced economic aid to Honduras but greatly increased military aid — a move that undermines the recently-installed civilian government and insures that the military will be the final arbiter in any future conflict within Honduras. Many believe that the Reagan administration views Honduras as a staging ground for an attack on the Sandinista government in neighboring Nicaragua. (Honduras was in fact the staging ground for the CIA coup that overthrew the Arbenz government of Guatemala in 1954, and Honduras' Swan Island, according to reports, now being refurbished, was the communications center for the U.S.-directed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.)

NICARAGUA

Area: 57,143 sq. mi. (slightly larger than Wisconsin); **population:** 2,750,000 (1981 est.); **density:** 48.6 people/sq. mi.; **urban:** 48.6%; **racial makeup:** 70% mestizo, 17% white, 9% Black, 4% Indian; **languages:** Spanish, English on the Atlantic coast; **capital:** Managua; **chief exports:** cotton, coffee, meat, chemical products, sugar; **GNP:** \$1.7 billion; **per capita income:** \$980 (1979); **per capita arable land:** 1.4 acres; **labor force breakdown:** 40% agriculture, 14% industry, 46% service (1979); **unemployment:** 17.5% (1980), 13.3% (1981) official figures; **literacy**

rate: 87% (1981), increased from 58% after 1980 Literacy Campaign; **teachers:** 13/1,000 people (1977); **population with access to safe water:** 70%; **people per doctor:** 1,670; **life expectancy:** 55 years; **infant mortality rate:** 37 per 1,000 live births (1975); **child deaths** (age one-four): 16 per 1,000 (1979); **educational changes since Somoza:** school-age children in school — 1978: 64.8%; 1980: 80%; adolescents in school — 1978: 14.7%; 1980: 20%.

Following the dissolution of the United Provinces of Central America, armed conflict between Conservatives — who wanted a return of special privileges to landowners and the clergy — and Liberals — who wanted reform — was intense in Nicaragua.

The Liberals decided to hire a U.S. soldier of fortune, William Walker, to help them. Walker arrived in Nicaragua in 1855 with a few dozen mercenaries and helped the Liberals to victory. But then he turned on them, declaring himself president of Nicaragua and also of El Salvador and Honduras. He proclaimed English the national language, reinstated slavery, contracted large loans using the country as collateral, and redistributed land to U.S. citizens. He was finally ousted by the combined efforts of Central Americans, the English and Cornelius Vanderbilt. His brief rule discredited the Liberals and ushered in 36 years of Conservative rule under which the economy stagnated and peasants were severely repressed.

For geographic reasons, it had been assumed that Nicaragua would be the site of any canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, but President Theodore Roosevelt decided against Nicaragua when that country's president insisted on retaining sovereignty over any canal. Nevertheless, when Nicaragua began negotiating with other countries in 1912, Roosevelt sent in 12,000 Marines. For the next 21 years, the U.S. occupied Nicaragua. During the 1920s and early 30s the patriot Augusto César Sandino and his troops fought to oust the Marines. (When Mexico demonstrated sympathy for Sandino in 1927, Undersecretary of State Robert Olds said: "Until now, Central America has always understood that governments which we recognize and support stay in power while those which we do not recognize and support fall. Nicaragua has become a test case. It is difficult to see how we can afford to be defeated.")

In 1932 President Franklin D. Roose-



The corrupt and brutal Somoza family controlled Nicaragua for 45 years before being ousted in 1979; above, Anastasio Somoza.

velt finally recalled the Marines. However, to take their place, the U.S. created, trained and subsidized the Nicaraguan National Guard. To command it, the U.S. selected Anastasio Somoza García, a soldier educated in the U.S. In 1934 Somoza (possibly with U.S. backing) ordered Sandino assassinated; in 1936 he became president, ushering in a U.S.-supported dynastic dictatorship that would last 45 years.

The greed, corruption and brutality of the Somoza family — the last of the line was estimated to be the ninth richest man in the world and his family owned half of all the registered land in Nicaragua — eventually led to revolution. A broad alliance of business people, city slumdweller, labor and peasant groups, Christian clergy, migrant workers and women from all classes joined to fight the Somoza government. The groups united under the leadership of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), named for the patriot who fought the U.S. Marines earlier in the century. Their efforts succeeded in 1979 and marked the first overthrow of a U.S.-backed dictatorship in Central America.

The Sandinista government is pushing for changes that will lead to greater social justice. Government efforts include the slashing of rent by up to 50 per cent, the expansion of health and educational facilities in the slums and through the countryside, and the provision of basic foodstuffs at subsidized prices. The government has also implemented a number of other social changes, the most impressive of which has been the literacy crusade which reduced illiteracy from 53 per

cent to 12 per cent in just over six months.

The U.S. sees the Sandinista government as a threat to its traditional control over the region and has launched a campaign to destabilize the country. (*Akwesasne Notes*, late spring, 1982, notes that "the Reagan Administration has a \$19 million 'slush fund' to promote covert actions against the Nicaraguan government.") The campaign includes the suspension of aid, blocking of loans in international lending agencies, a press campaign charging Nicaragua with support of the guerrillas in El Salvador (although no proof is offered), and a covert action plan to support a 500-man Latin American paramilitary force against Nicaragua. These efforts by the U.S. coincide with those of some sectors of the Nicaraguan business community who have refused to keep up production or have withdrawn large amounts of capital — in spite of incentives by the government — in order to create economic chaos. A particularly dangerous situation is presented by 3-5,000 ex-National Guardsmen (followers of Somoza) who are encamped across the border in Honduras and who launch frequent attacks against Nicaragua.

The new government faces other problems as well. Sixty thousand Nicaraguans died in the revolution to oust Somoza and the Sandinistas inherited a social and industrial infrastructure in shambles, deliberately destroyed by Somoza in his final days in office. Somoza — who fled Nicaragua with a personal fortune — left a national debt of 1.6 billion dollars, a debt which the Sandinistas have committed themselves to repay. The tasks that lie ahead are truly enormous.

For more information on Nicaragua, particularly its literacy campaign, see Vol. 12, No. 2 of the *Bulletin*; for more information about the role of women in Nicaragua, see pp. 19-21.

The statistics accompanying this article have been drawn from the following sources: *Compañero*, Issue #4, Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), available from the National Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, Washington, D.C., *Fodor's Central America, 1980* (McKay), *Information Please Almanac, 1982* (Simon & Schuster), *The Philosophy and Policies of the Government of Nicaragua*, March, 1982 (Managua), statistics sheets prepared by the Trocaire Bishops Commission, Dublin, Ireland, *The World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1982* (Newspaper Enterprise Assn.) and *World Development Report, 1981* (The World Bank, Washington, D.C.).

Women's activities in El Salvador and Nicaragua point up their separate but integral role in the histories of two countries

Women in Central America: Survival and Struggle

By Victoria Ortiz

Most history books virtually ignore the social conditions of women, to say nothing of the role women have played throughout history as movers and shapers, rather than watchers and conservers. It is especially difficult to find information about women in Central America, where feminism is only recently becoming a significant force and where the daily problems of survival and struggles for national liberation have created priorities other than research into the history of women.

Much work remains to be done; but it is also time to demand that as far as possible the written histories of all countries begin to acknowledge women as both a separate *and* an integral social sector whose problems and actions must be described, analyzed and understood within the context of their society. To that end, we present below two short pieces focusing on women in El Salvador and Nicaragua; they are based on the limited amount of material published to date in this country. We hope that by beginning to break the silence surrounding the history of women in Central America we can contribute to a new and more authentic presentation and understanding of the developments in those countries.

EL SALVADOR

Of the 4.5 million inhabitants of El Salvador, 2 per cent own 60 per cent of all the land, controlling thereby the most important export crops: cotton, coffee, sugar cane. Eight per cent of the population receives 50 per cent of the total national income, gleaned not only from agribusiness but also from the growing industrial sector. Of the total population, 53 per cent are women. Needless to say, a minuscule number of these women figure among the oligarchy, and those who

do are included by virtue of their relationship to men — their fathers, brothers or husbands.

The situation of Salvadoran women, while differing little from that of the majority of the population, is characterized by double oppression. For while the majority of Salvadoran women *and* men suffer from poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and medical care, women must bear the double burden of being poor *and* being female.

This situation is reflected in the fact that, for example, women agricultural workers, who work only two or three months of the year (as do migrant workers of both sexes) earn one-third of what men earn for the same time period. In fact, country women live a situation which is best described as feudal: since the *agregado* or sharecropping system recognizes male workers only, all contracts cover only the men and not the women and children who work beside them. Therefore, only the men are paid (the women and children add what they have harvested to that of the man with whom they work); only the men receive the scant daily food allowance; and only the men are entitled to whatever meager social security or health benefits there might be.

The life of a woman agricultural worker is hard in other ways. It is virtually impossible to maintain even a semblance of family life, since, like all migrant workers, she must be constantly on the move, following the crops. Marriage or permanent relationships with a man are well nigh impossible to sustain, and the incidence of single-mother households is incredibly high. It is these extremely poor sectors who are most victimized by the rampages of the Army and who most often seek refugee status across the Hon-

duran border, only to be massacred there or returned to the brutality from which they were fleeing.

The absence of employment opportunities in agriculture has forced many women to go to the cities, where they find work either as market vendors, domestic workers or prostitutes. The women market vendors are legion, and, as we shall see below, have become a political force to be contended with. These women often live in paper and cardboard shacks in the shantytowns on the outskirts of the urban centers whose streets and markets they and their children populate during selling hours.

Domestic workers may have more solid roofs over their heads, but that is about all that is better in their situation. They work inhumanly long hours, being in fact on call to the family which employs them for 24 hours a day. They are entitled to one day off every 7 to 14 days, and they are paid a pittance: from \$30 to \$60 a month. More than 80,000 Salvadoran women support themselves and their families this way, with no minimum wage, no overtime pay, no right to organize into a union, no right to medical care or severance pay.

The social framework in which these women survive is characterized by 50 per cent illiteracy (with twice as many illiterate women as men); an infant mortality rate of 40 deaths per 1000 births and 60 deaths per 1000 before reaching one year old; and a malnutrition rate among children of 75 per cent. There is but one maternity hospital in San Salvador, the capital of a country where the average rural woman gives birth eight or ten times in her lifetime, and where her urban sister is likely to have at least five children.

Throughout history people have at-

tempted to resist oppression, and the women of El Salvador are no exception. In 1921, the market women described above joined other social groups in street demonstrations in San Salvador and environs to protest the repressive measures imposed by the Melendez government. Their role was central and they did not escape the bloody police intervention, which left many women wounded and many others dead. The following year, a large group of working women donned mourning clothes and marched through the streets demanding the release of their men who had been imprisoned. Once again the demonstration was put down violently and at least seven women were killed.

Women in Insurrection

Women also played a significant role during the 1932 insurrection (see p. 5) and were more than amply represented among the 32,000 people massacred by the Martínez dictatorship's troops. In 1944 there was an important general sit-down strike in which large numbers of women participated; their presence in other trade union movements and actions was also significant.

In 1960 the women's organization which is best remembered today for its political militancy — the Brotherhood [sic] of Women — *Fraternidad de Mujeres* — joined other groups in demonstrations that ultimately succeeded in ousting Colonel Lemus. The 60s also saw a national strike movement involving 35,000 workers, men and women, and two major teachers' strikes which were violently repressed by the government. The National Association of Salvadoran Teachers/*Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños*, not surprisingly, had (and has presently) an 85 per cent female membership.

It was through participation in these labor struggles and through work on the community level around housing, health and education issues that many women became involved in the liberation struggle, which began in earnest in 1970. In the early 1970s, revolutionary organizations of peasant women, students, teachers and factory workers emerged throughout the country. In 1977 several groups of women organized to challenge the imprisonment, disappearance or murder by the government forces of their loved ones. As these groups led hunger strikes, demonstrations and marches, their members developed greater political understanding and commitment.

In 1978, the Association of Salvadoran Women/*Asociación de Mujeres de El Salvador* [AMES] was formed to politicize all women who were not participating in the struggle against the dictatorship. In the same year, two organizations of market vendors came to prominence through combative demonstrations and audacious occupations of city markets.

Increasing numbers of women joined the guerrillas as government repression grew and the urgency of the situation became more apparent. By the early 1980s, large numbers of women, many accompanied by their children, went into the mountains and took up arms. Today 40 per cent of the Revolutionary Council of the People's Revolutionary Army are women, reflecting a similar percentage among the ranks of combatants. And if statistics were available, we would no doubt find a parallel figure with regard to the numbers of women arrested, tortured, raped and killed by the government's armed forces.

In the midst of this desperate struggle for liberation, it is indeed extraordinary that the women of AMES, together with their male and female comrades in the major Salvadoran political and military organizations, have begun to address theoretical and ideological questions of vital importance to the successful transformation of the condition of women in El Salvador. Topics under discussion range from the practical issues of child care, sex education and contraceptive methods, to the deeper and thornier questions of male/female relations, the sexual double standard and machismo, and the study of women's historical roles in the family and in society.

El Salvador's struggle to free itself from over 50 years of brutal military rule, to rebuild a country ravaged by the incursions of profit-seeking North American corporations and to create more equitable economic, social and political systems will be long and hard. It is, however, evident that women will continue to be an integral and ever more important part of that profound transformation.

NICARAGUA

Nicaragua shares many historical, economic, political, social and cultural traits with the rest of Central America. At the same time, Nicaragua has its own particular history. Furthermore, precisely because of these differences — not least of which is Nicaragua's victory over Somocismo, which represented all that is

most reactionary and repressive in the dictatorships of dependent capitalism — the role of Nicaragua's women in the forging of their country's destiny has been different (but also similar in many ways) and in some areas has been better documented, than in other countries.

There is little written about Nicaraguan women before the early 20th century. One of the first references tells us that during the armed struggle waged by Sandino against the invasion by the U.S. Marines (1927-1934), women participated in most aspects of the war. While nothing in writing confirms their participation as soldiers, there are photographs which show armed women; and in his letters and reports Sandino referred to women in terms that seem to imply their having fought beside the men. We do know that Sandino was full of admiration for his female compatriots: "Many, many women of Nicaragua gave invaluable help. From all social classes came great supporters of the cause, which they served in many different ways: as spies, couriers, propagandists, and even directly in the army, doing nursing and house-keeping. Many of these women. . . , just like the soldiers, risked their lives and many also died. Their names and deeds constitute a true glory for Nicaragua and should be incorporated into our Homeland's history. . . ."

Poverty the Norm

During the Somoza family dictatorship, which lasted for almost half a century, the condition of Nicaraguan men and women was comparable to that of the people of El Salvador. Life expectancy for Nicaraguan women was 50 years; 50 percent of all mothers were unmarried and could expect to have at least five children; legally women's status was less protected than that of children, with a husband or other male relation having virtual control over most aspects of their lives. Economically, the entire population was brutally exploited, and poverty was the norm, existing alongside the obscene wealth of the Somoza family.

As in El Salvador, many Nicaraguan women first became involved in all-women's activities when they joined AMPRONAC, the *Asociación de la Mujer Nicaraguense ante la Problemática Nacional* (Women's Association Confronting the National Problem). Founded in 1977, the group focused initially on questions of human rights and the greater participation of women in national life. One of its earliest public actions was a

1978 meeting to protest the disappearance of thousands of peasants at the hands of the National Guard and the torture and mistreatment of prisoners. AMPRONAC rapidly grew and the vanguard of the membership soon realized that it was not sufficient to fight only against human rights violations. Under the leadership of women like Lea Guido and Gloria Carrión (today Minister of Social Welfare and General Coordinator of AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan women's association, respectively), both of whom were committed members of the then clandestine FSLN/Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, the membership of AMPRONAC became more and more militant, until most of its women joined actively in the mass effort to topple the dictatorship.

Women in the Armed Forces

As the struggle intensified, many women, accompanied by their families as in El Salvador, went to the mountains to join the guerrillas. They shared all aspects of guerrilla life, and all reports indicate that the women were highly respected. By the end of the armed struggle in 1979, as many as one-third of the armed forces of liberation were women, and many of the most valiant and successful commanders were women who were outstanding not only as fighters but also as military leaders and strategists.

Those women who did not actually join the popular army were by no means marginal to the national struggle. Many provided safe houses for members of the underground; they sewed uniforms and disguises, cooked food, passed messages, collected and delivered top secret information, took care of the children of those who had gone to the mountains, took part in spectacular armed actions such as the take-over of foreign embassies or the capturing of the Presidential Palace. In many creative and heroic ways, women helped to forge the final victory, and their children also became adept at all the offensive and defensive skills needed to survive and defeat the enemy.

In the final insurrection of León, Nicaragua's second largest city, the leadership of the Sandinista forces was largely female, and the Commander in Chief of that operation was Dora María Tellez (known also as Comandante Dos and presently in charge of the FSLN's political work in Managua). At the time the Somoza government was overthrown in 1979, four of the seven Sandinista military chiefs of staff were women.

Now that the country is faced with the arduous task of national reconstruction, women are still a vital part of national life. Some women have moved back into the private spheres of home and family. This has been noted and is being taken very seriously, because most active Nicaraguan women see the urgency for insuring that women will continue to develop and participate ever more actively in Nicaragua's present and future.

At the forefront of this on-going struggle to keep women involved in political and social life is AMNLAE (Asociación de la Mujer Nicaragüense Luisa Amanda Espinosa), the Luisa Amanda Espinosa Nicaraguan Women's Association, named after the first Sandinista woman to die fighting (April, 1970). A continuation of AMPRONAC, AMNLAE at first devoted its energies to organizing women around the major tasks of reconstruction, defense and support for the revolution. After some time, AMNLAE realized that its effectiveness as a tool for organizing women was hampered by its being a mass organization: in a sense this structure put it in competition with other mass organizations, such as those of peasants, teachers, medical workers, etc. It was seen that many women who were already participating in other organizations were not working with AMNLAE because to do so would be to duplicate activities.

An Expanding Focus

Therefore, AMNLAE has recently restructured itself to become a broad-based women's movement which can now focus on women within sectors which already have mass organizations: factory workers, teachers, students, village dwellers, Christians, agricultural workers, neighborhood women, and others. The women's caucuses in these sectors focus not only on the greatest needs of the nation but also on the women's basic concerns.

In addition, AMNLAE, which in a sort of poetic justice has its national headquarters in what used to be the mansion of Somoza's mother, is spearheading the drive to revise all of Nicaragua's laws concerning women, children and the family. To date there have been some major advances: women have now been granted greater rights with regard to their children; adoption has been made possible for older couples and for single men and women; sexist advertising is forbidden; pesticides which damage or threaten women's and men's reproductive systems have been banned or their

use restricted; working women now get four weeks leave before giving birth to help prevent premature deliveries and eight weeks off after the birth to encourage breast feeding and thus lower the high rate of infant mortality. In addition, the group works on winning for women the right to equal pay for equal work, on their right to day care, on encouraging female participation in union leadership, and so on. They have already been successful in obtaining the creation of a Women's Occupational Health Section in the Department of Labor; its main concern is to improve women's working conditions, especially those of pregnant women.

Most spectacular, perhaps, of all the legislative victories is that achieved by AMNLAE and the domestic workers' union. Domestic workers now receive a minimum wage, work a ten-hour day (the union is fighting for an eight-hour day), receive double pay for work done on holidays and for overtime, are entitled to six months severance pay, have some medical rights, and are about to be granted social security benefits.

Tomás Borge, Minister of Interior, has said: "We cannot speak of women's liberation so long as discriminatory laws against women exist . . . so long as men are above women and against women. . . . They were in the leadership of military units, on the firing lines during the war and therefore they have every right in the world to be in the front lines during the period of reconstruction. . . . [W]e must cease thinking of a government of men and begin thinking of a government of men and women."

His words are echoed and expanded by Gloria Carrión, head of AMNLAE: "There are two aspects to our work to destroy the historic isolation of women — to change their socio-economic conditions and, through political power, to change the ideology. Through participating in the reconstruction and restructuring of Nicaraguan society, women are guaranteeing their own future, in that what is created now becomes a guide for the future." □

(For more information, contact Women's International Resource Exchange, 2700 Broadway, Rm. 7, New York, N.Y. 10025.)

About the Author

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Indian Peoples of Central America: Oppression Continues

With the exception of Guatemala, only small, isolated communities of indigenous people considered to be "Indians" exist in Central America today. The massive killing of Indians during the Spanish conquest, enslavement and epidemics, and centuries of periodic massacre, intermarriage and ladinization have decimated the region's once large and varied population of indigenous peoples.

Most Central American Indians are descendants of the Mayan, Aztec and other peoples who swept through the isthmus from Mexico. In Panama, Nicaragua and parts of Honduras, however, the remaining Indian population are South American in origin, with entirely different cultural and linguistic patterns from the Indians of Western Central America. The articles below focus on the situation of the Indian peoples of Guatemala, where over half the population is Indian, and Nicaragua, where relations between the Miskitu Indians and the Sandinista government have become a major international issue.

GUATEMALA By Paul Wasserman

Guatemala is unique among Central American nations in that over half its population, some 4 million of its 7.2 million people, are Indians. Until very recently, when the level of violence caused a sharp drop in the number of tourists, tourism was Guatemala's second largest industry. For the Indians, the wealth flowing into their country from tourism has been a source of bitterness: the tourist dollars never reach the Indians themselves, who remain trapped in incredible poverty, their way of life threatened by the very people who turned their culture into a commodity. In fact,

the Indians' way of life has been threatened ever since the conquest.

The northern jungles of Guatemala saw the flourishing of the Classical Mayan civilization, one of the most advanced civilizations in the Americas, in fact in the world. The Mayas mysteriously abandoned the area around 1000 A.D., moving to Mexico's Yucatan, but a people descended from the Mayas remained in the area, and these were the Indians whom the Spanish encountered when they arrived in the area in 1523.

At the time of the conquest, the largest and dominant Indian people in Guatemala were the Quiché, or Maya-Quiché, a blending of Mayan-descended people and other Indians who had migrated from Mexico. Other large Indian nations in Guatemala included the Cakchiquels, Kekchi and Mam. Within a few short years, an army of conquistadors under Pedro de Alvarado swept through Guatemala, making alliances with some of the area's Indian nations, but conquering most through a series of bloody wars and massacres. Indian rulers and priests were murdered, books and temples destroyed, entire cities burned and the people forced or converted to Christianity, as the Spanish sought to wipe out all traces of the indigenous cultures. Indians, who had previously been connected via large, loosely-knit communities or nations, were resettled in villages built on the Spanish model and put into slavery, debt servitude and other forms of forced labor.

Today's Indians have preserved a culture distinct and separate from that of Spanish-speaking Guatemala; it blends elements of the European culture forced upon them with remnants of their original way of life. Over the past four centuries, the preservation of a distinct way

of life has been the main form of resistance adopted by Guatemala's indigenous people, although periodic, localized Indian uprisings also dot Guatemala's history. Today, this is changing, as large numbers of Indians have been joining the growing resistance movement against the military governments which have ruled Guatemala with increasingly bloody repression.

To understand the history and present situation of Guatemala's Indians, it is necessary to look at their relation to the land. Agriculture was at the center of pre-Columbian life but as elsewhere in the Americas, Guatemala's Indians, who farmed communally, did not have the same concept of land ownership as did European conquerors. The conquistadors seized much of the best land, and forced the Indians to work it for them.

When Guatemala won independence from Spain in 1821, life did not change much for the country's indigenous people — their masters were now "Guatemalan" rather than "Spanish." The "Liberal Reform" era which began in 1871, on the other hand, did change life for many Indians, mostly for the worse. Guatemala's attempts to "modernize" included the development of coffee as an export crop. Large tracts of the best farmland, especially on the Pacific coast, were seized from Indians, many of whom were forced to work for horrendously low pay on the coffee plantations. Here, they were joined by many Ladino (Spanish/Indian) campesinos; while Indian and Ladino campesinos suffered under similar conditions, they remained separate, with the Ladinos looking down on the Indians as uncivilized and inferior.

Through the years, more and more of the most fertile Indian land was seized by wealthy landowners. More and more

Indians were forced to work on plantations, as their own food plots became smaller and less fertile. With the growth of industry, some Indians began moving to the cities to find work. They lived in squalid shantytowns and worked, when they could, under grueling conditions for very low pay.

Recently, this process has accelerated, affecting a larger portion of Indian communities. The discovery of minerals, especially oil and nickel, the development of large-scale cattle ranching, and the opening up of Guatemala's northern jungles have led to more and more seizures of Indian lands by the generals and wealthy elite who rule the country. Truckloads of Indians can be seen on Guatemala's highways, making the trip between highlands and coast, where they still do not earn enough to feed their families. These part-time agricultural laborers have become the backbone of Guatemala's economy.

As Indians in increasing numbers left their villages for the coast, they came into contact with Indians from other villages. Many began to see that they had been oppressed as Indians — and that they had their own distinct history and culture, which they wanted to preserve, as Indians. And they began demanding their rights as Indians. On the plantations they organized unions and staged strikes for higher wages and better treatment. In their villages, they protested illegal land seizures and organized cooperatives. When protesters, cooperative leaders and supportive priests were murdered or kidnapped, they protested the repression.

Here, Guatemala's Indians found themselves moving in the same direction as many Ladinos. A large portion of Guatemala's Ladino population had never adjusted to being ruled by the series of corrupt generals who had run the country since 1954 (see general history of Guatemala, pp. 13-18).

Indians Join Resistance

By the late 1970s, many Ladinos concluded that armed resistance was the only way to protect themselves and to change their country. A generation of guerrillas took up arms, but with an important difference: they were joined by growing numbers of Indians, who had also decided that armed resistance was their only recourse. As Indians became an increasingly important part of the resistance movement, the government increasingly focused its repression on the

Indian population. Hence, the kidnappings, the beatings, massacres (such as the one in Panzos in 1978, in which 100 Indians protesting illegal land seizures were machine-gunned to death), the bombings, the occupation and destruction of entire villages. Since 1978, thousands of Indians have been killed by Guatemalan security forces and by right-wing death squads linked to the government.

An important process is under way in Guatemala. Many Ladinos and Indians are beginning to realize that they all suffer under similar conditions and are fighting against similar injustices. Many Ladinos are for the first time accepting Indians as equals with a right to their land, their culture and a decent life. Many Indians are, for the first time, moving beyond their total separation from Ladino society, while insisting on preserving their way of life. If this pro-

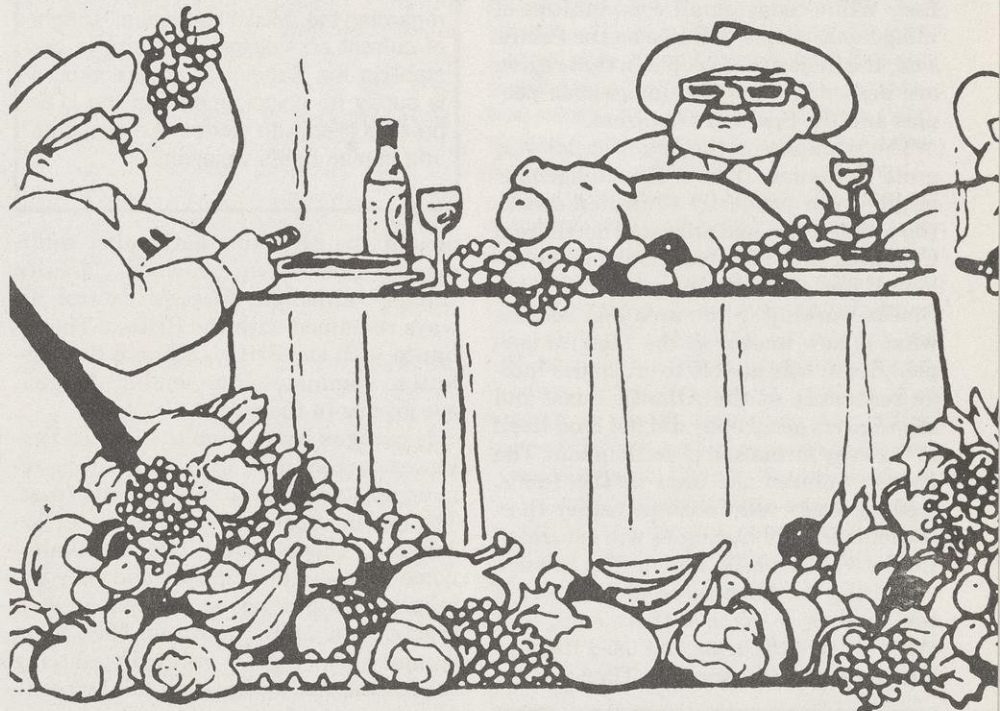
cess continues, Guatemala may well become the first country in the Americas where native peoples regain control over their land, their lives and their destiny. □

"Declaration of Ximche," an important document pertaining to the oppression of Indians in Guatemala, is published by The Alberto Fuentes Mohr Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in Guatemala. The 16-page bilingual document (English and French) is available for \$1 (add 50¢ postage) from the National Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala. For address and other resources, see pp. 31-32.

About the Author

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An article about the Miskitu people of Nicaragua appears on the following page.



The native populations of Central American countries have long been exploited by wealthy landowners and others in power. Indians in Guatemala—and other countries—are becoming increasingly involved in resistance movements. (Illustration from Guatemala! The Hope and the Horror)

NICARAGUA

By Dolores Schaeffer

The article below is based on research and analysis supplied by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Professor of Native American Studies at California State University, Hayward; the Instituto Histórico Centroamericano in Managua; and Judy Butler of NACLA.

At the time of the Spanish conquest, the indigenous population on the Pacific side of Nicaragua was composed primarily of descendants of the Mayan and Aztec civilizations. Spain formed settlements in this area and forced the indigenous population to work on agricultural plantations as slaves. In addition, within a 20-year period, some half million Indians were removed from Nicaragua by the slave trade, shipped to the West Indies and mines of Peru; perhaps an equal number died from war and disease or fled. While today small communities of indigenous people still live on the Pacific side, the majority of people in that region are descendants of the indigenous peoples and the Spanish colonizers.

The situation on the Atlantic side was quite different. There the indigenous people were primarily Chibchan-speaking peoples who had migrated north from Colombia and Panama. (During the colonial period they intermarried with Blacks working in the area and became what is now known as the Miskitu people.) Spain was unable to crush the Indian resistance on the Atlantic Coast and the region's geography did not lend itself to the easy formation of settlements. The British entered the area in the 1630s, seeking trade relationships rather than settlements and hoping to win control of the entire Caribbean region. The British, exploiting the Miskitu people's hatred of the Spanish to achieve these ends, provided them with arms and used them in forays against the Spanish. They also ex-

It must be noted that there is considerable disagreement and confusion about events affecting the Miskitus—particularly regarding their recent relocation from areas near the Honduran border. The accompanying article presents one perspective—which is supported by many Native American and other U.S. scholars and activists—on the position of the Miskitu people in Nicaragua.

Another perspective holds that the Miskitus are struggling to maintain their traditional lands and way of life while the Sandinistas are seeking to utilize their land area in the national agrarian reform and to promote the integration of the Miskitu people into the Nicaraguan society and economy.

Clearly this issue cannot be examined without also considering the questionable nature of most, if not all, of the reports in the U.S. establishment press regarding the "Miskitu question." In light of current administration efforts to destabilize the Sandinista government, it is surely no coincidence that the U.S. press is filled with stories of massacres and human rights violations.

ploited the Miskitus' nationalist sentiments, and even crowned Miskitu "kings," although effective control always remained with the British. The alliance with the British allowed the Miskitu to dominate other smaller indigenous groups in the region.

Nicaragua broke from the United Provinces in 1838 and by 1860 Britain renounced its claims to the Atlantic coast. The region, labeled a "reserve" under Nicaragua, theoretically had semi-autonomous rule, a principle defended by the inhabitants but never implemented in practice. In 1894, however, Nicaragua occupied the region militarily, forcing the Miskitus to pledge their allegiance to Nicaragua and formally ending autonomous rule, though not the desire for it. This reincorporation set the stage for the exploitation of the region's vast natural resources by foreign companies, primarily those from the U.S. (U.S. economic penetration of the region reached a peak during World War II, but declined sharply thereafter.) Many Indians were forced off their lands to make way for large-scale banana plantations and forestry enterprises.

The Somoza dictatorship (1936-1979) generally neglected the area except for the exploitation of mineral resources and

some forestry operations. Education and health and social services, which were at grossly inadequate levels on the Pacific side, barely existed on the Atlantic Coast.

Most coastal people lived in extreme poverty through bare subsistence farming and fishing. The Atlantic Coast's sparse population presented little threat to the dictator and there was only a small presence of the repressive National Guard. The insurrection which overthrew Somoza in 1979 and brought the Sandinista National Liberation Front to power, barely touched the Coast.

A Devastated Region

The Sandinista government found the coast devastated economically, the legacy of centuries of colonialism, foreign economic domination and neglect. The legacy also included extreme mistrust and suspicion by the Miskitus of "these Spanish," and there was a corresponding lack of knowledge and understanding of the indigenous population by the Sandinistas. Errors of cultural insensitivity were made — and acknowledged — by the Sandinistas, but at the same time significant progress was made in bringing health care and literacy training (in the native languages as well as Spanish) to the area. Steps were taken to begin to resolve the severe economic problems. But members of the former National Guard, thousands of whom were encamped across the border in Honduras, have been intent on exploiting the Miskitus' age-old hatred of "the Spanish" as part of their attempt to overthrow the new government. Cross-border raids have escalated since the end of 1981, claiming hundreds of lives and forcing the government to relocate a number of Miskitu communities. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Miskitu people do not recognize the border. The traditional Miskitu territory extends north into Honduras, and many people have family and land on both sides.

Despite this critical situation, the new government is moving forward to implement its 1981 "Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" which guarantees equality, the preservation of indigenous culture and legal rights to traditional lands. It also commits the revolution to fight against all forms of racism.

About the Author

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Photo: Francis Wardle in Guatemala! The Horror and the Hope

The Black presence in Central America is either ignored or misrepresented in texts; information to fill this gap is presented

The Black Presence in Central America: Background Information

Most U.S. books about Central America neglect or misrepresent the role and presence of Black people in that area. In part this reflects the authors' racist perceptions of that region; in part, this reflects the exclusion of Blacks from the political and economic mainstream of all Central American countries except Belize and, to a lesser extent, Panama.

Blacks have long been an important presence in Central America. The articles below will serve as an introduction to the type of material omitted from most texts.

PART I

By A. Faulkner Watts

A consideration of the Black presence in Central America is a complicated undertaking that must consider numerous complex factors including historical events, comparative numbers and national psyches.

It must be remembered, first, that the modern Central American nations were all once under the Spanish hegemony, and that the conquistadors and their followers spread the virus of color prejudice throughout the so-called New World. Active resistance to this oppression was mounted by the maroons, slaves determined to be free who ran away from their masters, set up palenques or strongholds in the hills and fought to remain free. (The word derives from the term *cimarrones*, meaning wild or runaway, which was applied to these Blacks by the Spaniards.) The maroons harassed the Spaniards, pillaging haciendas and raiding the Camino Real and the Cruces Trail, routes for transporting the wealth of Peru to the Atlantic coast for shipment to Spain. The maroon raids thus

threatened the life line of the Spanish crown. (It was the maroons who made possible Drake's success in Panama when he raided the Spanish treasure, and Drake was fulsome with his praise of his Black allies and benefactors.) Felipillo and Anton Mandinga Mozambique — whom the Spaniards addressed as *Don Mozambique* — were among the best known of the maroon leaders operating on the isthmus. The greatest of all, Bayano, was finally captured only by trickery; he was so respected by the Spaniards that they sent him to Spain where they gave him a lifetime pension instead of putting him to death. Panama's greatest river is named after him.

Still visible evidence of the power of the maroons is the existence of two towns, Palenque and Pacora, ceded to them by the Spanish crown. The crown had finally decided it was cheaper and more practical to achieve peace with the maroons through treaty than by warfare.

The formation of independent nations early in the last century did not free the area from the slave-owning mentality of the European nation to which they had been attached. A caste system with whites (either Spanish- or native-born) at the top of the pyramid had been institutionalized before independence from Spain. It affected both descendants of slaves and of free Blacks who had come to the area in search of work (see accompanying article). Access to certain jobs, to public office, to commerce and to higher education was limited to those who could prove by legal formula the whiteness of their blood, a process known as "*limpieza de sangre*." Nowhere in Central America did general emancipation change the nature of the caste system. Eventually the free Blacks in some areas

began to break through the barriers to fuller opportunity, but the pattern set by the caste system persisted even in the absence of laws restricting opportunity. The mentality and the psyche of both Black and white were affected. For Blacks, self-deprecation would become normal, a way of life that would negatively influence their behavior in reaction to their adverse circumstance. For whites, a suppressive mentality would be continuously affirmed.

The difficulty in appraising the present status of the Black population in Central America is indicated by the fact that it is extremely difficult to even determine the current size of the African presence. We would, for example, be at once in difficulty if we accepted unquestioningly Central American census figures. The powers in most countries (excepting perhaps Belize, which is predominantly Black) prefer to ignore the presence of Black citizens, a fact which has impact on the official figures as well as on the status of Blacks. The term "Negro" usually refers only to those who are very dark and show little or no trace of mixed ancestry. A person considered Black by U.S. standards would in Central America probably be classified as "mulatto" or "mestizo" (*i.e.*, of so-called "mixed blood"); more important, such brown-skinned persons would so classify themselves. Persons on the lowest rung of the social acceptance ladder tend in such censuses to classify themselves one step upward if they can do so without being challenged. It is thus fairly safe to assume that the figures recorded for "Negro" fall substantially short of the real number of those of African descent.

There are still legal mechanisms in place which effectively limit the growth of the Black population in Central

America, which has not been isolated from the kind of thinking that has led Argentina, Peru and Chile to purposely plan for large infusions of Europeans. Guatemala, for example, prohibits the immigration of "people of the Negro race." The edict, written into the 1945 constitution, remained substantially the same in the 1966 constitution; at present, there is no constitution, but neither has there been any change, according to the Guatemalan consulate. Honduras draws the line against "Negroes, Lebanese, Arabs and Gypsies," although consular officials insist that U.S. Blacks are welcome. El Salvador does not welcome the Black immigrant, although the law that existed from the 1930s to the 1950s prohibiting the immigration into El Salvador of "Negroes and Orientals" has been repealed. Costa Rica considers itself a white country and presumably intends to maintain the status quo if it can, although previous laws prohibiting Black immigration are no longer in force.

Those Blacks already in residence in most countries find that their presence and history are ignored by those in power. Group self-realization is enhanced when its history and culture are acknowledged in the literature and materials read by school children and the general public. This has in general long been denied to the Black population.

The eminent Venezuelan poet Elroy Blanco spoke to all of Latin America when he deplored the absence of Blacks and Indians in works of art. In *Píntame Angelitos Negros/Paint Me Little Black Angels*, he implores

If somewhere there is an artist
 who paints saints
 one who paints heavens
 let him fill the heavens of my land
 with the shades of my people
 with its blonde angels
 and its brown-faced angels
 and little Black and
 little Indian angels.

Panama provides valuable insights into the effects of the official attitude on education and cultural activity. In spite of Panama's sizeable Black population, there is little of the African presence in popular literature or art. Black studies materials are not included in the curricular offerings either in elementary or secondary schools. However, every high school history book refers to the slave trade as disgraceful and makes brief mention of slave resistance and some of the resistance leaders. (The full role of the African as resistance fighter in Panama is scarcely known by the general populace.) Most recently, the govern-

Common problems shared by Blacks in Central America and Blacks in North and South America will be an important part of the agenda of the coming Third Congress of Blacks in the Americas to be held this coming August in Brazil. (The Second Congress was held in Panama two years ago.) For further information, write to The Black Congress, P.O. Box 535, Church Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10007, or phone Dr. George Priestley at (212) 923-8611.

ment has made possible the printing of George Westerman's important work on the contributions of West Indian Blacks to the construction of the Canal; it may be adopted by the schools. The daily newspaper *La República* covers events and activities involving Black Panamanians. Several organizations led by Black professors such as Alberto Smith and Melvia Lowe de Goodin work constantly to project the Black presence either in terms of protest or with various programmatic offerings. Almost all of these activists are of Antillean (West Indian) descent.

Until quite recently, it was official dogma that Antillean Blacks were "not assimilable." The Africans who had entered the country as slaves had long been more or less fused into the culture; they were not assertive (if aware) of their African heritage. Many had "mixed" with the Indians. They were, in Panamanian terms, "assimilated." As late as 1950, immigration was denied to those Blacks who did not speak Spanish. In this connection perhaps the most significant event to have occurred in the last decade has been the establishment of an Afro-Antillean project in Maraón. Initiated by the Patrimonio Histórico of the Instituto Nacional de Cultura y Deportes under the leadership of the internationally respected anthropologist, the late Dr. Reina Torres de Arauz, its first undertaking has been the establishment of an Afro-Antillean museum celebrating the contributions of the West Indians to Panamanian history and culture. Panama is now beginning to recognize those African Americans for whom it used to reserve such pejorative epithets as "chombo" (said to be applied by Columbus to an Indian girl), "conquito" (Little Congo) and "narizon de chorizo" (flat nose or sausage nose). Panama might well evolve into a country in which skin color is of no significant importance.

It is also instructive to look at Costa

Rica, which presents a different picture. As in Panama, Blacks first came to Costa Rica as free people with the conquistadors or as slaves. These were quickly absorbed. Later, Blacks came from Jamaica to build the railroad that would be an integral part of the banana industry. These workers were largely restricted to a designated area and considered stateless persons. It was not until the Civil War of 1948 that they and their descendants would achieve a kind of national identity. In recompense for their support of the Partido Liberación Nacional, those born in the land could for the first time be accorded citizenship. Like those West Indians who went to Panama, the Jamaicans felt themselves superior to the native Costa Ricans with whom they came in contact. At the same time, the Jamaicans were despised because they held on to their English language and maintained their West Indian customs.

Today the Episcopal church in Costa Rica is active in promoting the interests of the Blacks. (As late as 1977, Black culture was not included in the school curricula and Black history was not considered of sufficient significance to merit being taught.) In Puerto Limón, where the vast majority of Blacks live and the standard of living is low, Quince Duncan, teacher and prolific author of books reflecting the African experience, has noted that "it is incredible the amount of prejudice that teachers bring to schools dominated by whites." In contrast to Panama, there are relatively few Blacks either as students or as faculty members in the universities. Here, too, are found occasional Black teachers who unconsciously display their conditioned derogation of Blackness.

While the older generation believes it important to keep the English language alive among the Blacks, the younger generation seems inclined to give up English and to become more Costa Rican by fully adopting Spanish as their mother tongue. On the other hand, this young generation has also been greatly influenced by U.S. Blacks. "If," says Duncan, "their parents for lack of knowing the language had to suffer passively, the new generation of Blacks are not likely to tolerate more injustice." □

About the Author

DR. A. FAULKNER WATTS, translator of the Haitian Maroons, *Liberty or Death* by Jean Fouchard (Blyden Press, 1982), has done extensive on-site research on the maroons in Panama.

PART II

By Elmo Doig

Blacks in Central America consist essentially of two groups: first, the descendants of people who were brought directly from Africa during the period of Spanish colonization; and second, the descendants of people who migrated from the West Indies after the middle of the 19th century. Their ancient African origins are the same and so in many ways are the reasons for their presence in Central America. The first came primarily as slaves, by force; the others, as free workers but with little choice. Yet for generations they stood apart: two branches of a common stem, separated centuries ago by colonialism.

The Blacks who came to Central America as slaves helped clear the Central American forests. They built the ships used by the Spaniards to explore the South American coast. They built the Spanish settlements, worked the indigo and sugar plantations and the gold and silver mines. Demand for slave labor was relatively small and short lived, however. (The mines, for example, were exhausted by mid-18th century, and cheap peasant labor was quite sufficient for the other activities that promised profitability.) Therefore, slaves in colonial Central America, unlike those in the U.S. South, obtained their freedom relatively early, long before slavery was formally abolished. In the northern parts of the Central American isthmus they were brought primarily to the Atlantic coast. There were also settlements of Blacks in the Southern part (Panama and Costa Rica). During the next 300 years, Black people mixed with the Indians and the criollos (New World Spanish descendants), so that by the time Central America won its independence from Spain in 1821, there was a diffusion of Blacks in the population of the Central American republics.

The Spanish did not occupy the Caribbean coast of Central America. During the 17th and 18th centuries, other Europeans, chiefly the English, occupied the coast from time to time. To this region the British brought African slaves to cut timber in the rich forests of the Miskitu Coast of Nicaragua and British Honduras (now Belize), and the descendants of these slaves (and of the Blacks that came from the British West Indies in the 19th century) are still an English-speaking community. (It was in fact the migration of Blacks from the West Indies in the last century and early part of this

century that sizeably increased the Black population of the entire region.)

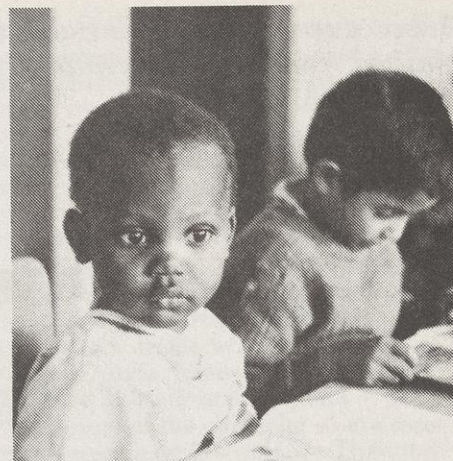
Although slavery was officially abolished by the United Provinces of Central America in 1824, social inequality based on race persisted (see accompanying article).

In the mid-19th century, U.S. capital seeking investment opportunities overseas found receptive and pliant collaborators in the nascent oligarchies of Central America. These U.S. investments spurred a demand for labor that encouraged the migrations of West Indian workers to Central America during the middle and late 19th century when the decline in West Indian sugar production was causing rampant unemployment. West Indians who came to Central America in search of jobs were forced to work for next to nothing. They came as field hands in the banana plantations of United Fruit, as workers in the construction gangs to build railroads in Panama and later Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala, and as laborers to build the Panama Canal. They also came to cut timber along the Atlantic coast in Belize and Nicaragua.

The trans-isthmus railroad in Panama, built 60 years before the Panama Canal, resulted from the California Gold Rush which demanded speedy movement of people and supplies between the eastern U.S. and the Pacific Coast. Of 5,000 West Indians who came to work on the railroad, 2,000 remained after completion. Many moved to join the railroad construction workers in Costa Rica. Those who stayed in Panama found jobs made possible by the economic boom that came from the infusion of money generated by the railroad and the high staff maintained during its early years of operation. But dependence on U.S. traffic ruined the economy when that traffic shifted to the new U.S. transcontinental railroad.

West Indian Labor Force

In the 1870s the U.S. company that became United Fruit began cultivating bananas in Jamaica. To diversify its resources, the company expanded to Central America in the latter part of the 19th century and soon dominated the area's market and shipping. Not only did the importation of West Indians assure a pool of excess labor to keep wages down, but it also meant a labor force that could be kept relatively isolated from the local population. The West Indian workers, experienced banana pickers, understood



Blacks are a significant part of the Central American population, but they are excluded from government and business spheres.

the language spoken by the white overseers from the U.S., and their language and cultural differences made it hard for them to draw support from the local Spanish-speaking population. To further forestall labor cooperation, United Fruit employed some mestizos and Indians on a part-time basis on the plantations, and paid them less. (The number of workers of West Indian descent employed by the banana industry has declined since the 1930s, and immigration has slackened. Even when jobs are available, the inducements to stay are weak, given the continuing poor standard of living that workers may expect. Increasing numbers of workers have emigrated to urban centers like Tegucigalpa in Honduras. Many young West Indians have come to the U.S.)

To transport the bananas quickly to the coastal parts and to ships for export, railroads became a priority, and in Honduras, Guatemala and Costa Rica, more West Indians were brought to build those railroads.

By far the largest West Indian migration to Central America was due to the building of the Panama Canal. In the late 1800s France's attempt to build the first canal brought 18,000 West Indians from Jamaica. When that project collapsed, virtually all of the Jamaican workers were left stranded. When the U.S. took up where France left off in the early part of this century, the West Indian Blacks it recruited made up three-fourths of the labor force of 44,000. The balance was mainly Italians and Spanish. Only a handful of workers were from Central America. These hiring

Continued on page 38

A new curriculum on El Salvador gives the kind of information omitted from most texts and serves as a model for lesson plans on other countries

A Lesson Plan on El Salvador

Given the poor quality of most texts on Central America (see article beginning on page 3), teachers wishing to present a more accurate view must use alternative materials or create their own lesson plans.

The San Francisco-based Teachers' Committee on Central America has created a curriculum guide entitled "El Salvador: Roots of Conflict" that would be helpful to those wishing to help youngsters understand the events leading to the current conflict in that country and in Central America in general. Because of time constraints, the curriculum's creators decided to focus on El Salvador, but they stress the importance of a regional perspective and urge teachers to discuss Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras and other neighboring countries when analyzing El Salvador's situation and U.S. policy there. (Teachers can also use the curriculum as a model when preparing units on other Central American countries.)

The curriculum guide is geared to high school classes with low to medium reading skills but can be adapted to other grades. It seeks to involve students rather than concentrate on traditional lecture/note-taking techniques. Lessons are provided for ten days, with suggestions for three- and five-day units.

The curriculum was designed to help students: 1. Understand El Salvador's geographic location in the world; 2. understand El Salvador's socio-economic conditions, and infer from these facts causes of the current conflict; 3. understand the political forces contending for power in El Salvador; 4. understand how political conflict in El Salvador affects the lives of individuals; 5. understand the nature of U.S. involvement in El Salvador; and 6. use this knowledge about El Salvador to analyze the causes of the conflict and to understand ongoing current events as reported by the

news media.

Major skills students will use in the unit include reading comprehension; map reading; chart and graph interpretation; understanding the use of socio-economic indicators as a measure of a country's quality of life; inferential reasoning; comparing and contrasting differing experiences of conflict; opinion-gathering through survey; analyzing written information; reading and interpreting news articles; and understanding the political spectrum (left, right and center) and its use in analyzing differing political beliefs.

The ten-day unit covers the following:

Day 1: Introduction to study of El Salvador through news articles. El Salvador's geography/map interpretation. Begin study of socio-economic conditions: chart. Homework: Finish questions. Collect news articles on El Salvador for five days.

Day 2: Continue study of socio-economic conditions with discussion of homework. Activity on income distribution: graph.

Day 3: Contending political forces. Reading, discussion and activity on opposing viewpoints. Homework: Writing paragraph on possible sources of conflict.

Day 4: Political spectrum. Application of political spectrum to the situation in El Salvador (optional lesson plan).

Day 5: Guest speaker, film or slide show if possible to arrange. If not, current events and news articles, especially discussion of articles students bring in. Samples provided. Explanation of homework assignment: Survey of U.S. involvement, due Day 8.

Day 6: Reading of interviews with two refugees from El Salvador, contrasting their lives. Homework: Finish questions.

Day 7: Discuss interviews. Other personal accounts provided for optional use. Current events, if not done before.

Day 8: Fact and opinion on U.S. in-

volvement in El Salvador. Present fact sheet on U.S. aid to El Salvador; discuss. Discuss results of survey. Announce and explain debate on U.S. involvement. Homework (might begin in class): Opposing viewpoints on U.S. involvement. Prepare two arguments on either side. Optional: Read and discuss "Two Views of the War in El Salvador" (Ed Asner and President Reagan).

Day 9: Debate on U.S. involvement. Optional homework: Writing a paragraph on personal opinion of U.S. involvement.

Day 10: Final in-class writing assignment: The assassination of Archbishop Romero.

A lesson plan based on the third and fourth day of the curriculum appears below. The full curriculum is available for \$6 (including postage and handling) from the Teachers' Committee on Central America, 5511 Vicente Way, Oakland, Cal. 94609. (A second edition reflecting current changes in the government of El Salvador is now being prepared.)

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. List the political forces in El Salvador;
2. Define in their own words the terms oligarchy, military, junta, opposition and spectrum;
3. Identify the persons or groups who are considered Left, Right, and Center;
4. Explain in their own words why each group is different; and
5. Explain in their own words why these groups would disagree on the solutions to the problems of El Salvador.

Age level: Grades 9 and up. (Procedures may be adapted for grades 5-7.)

Time Needed: Two 45-minute class periods.

Teacher Preparation: Read back-

ground information on El Salvador (see below plus pp. 13-18 and 19-21).

Materials Needed: Copies of the information on major political forces (p. 29) and on the political spectrum (p. 30) plus Activities One and Two for each student (p. 30).

Day 1: Procedure

Distribute the information sheet on major political forces in El Salvador. Students will be reading the sheet during the class; *make* any necessary adjustments for differences in reading levels (e.g., some students may work with others who need to have the material read aloud).

Present and *develop* vocabulary (oligarchy, military, junta, opposition, spectrum) in context.

Allow students sufficient time to read the selection.

Discuss the selection using questions similar to those suggested below.

1. How much of the farmable land in El Salvador is owned by the oligarchy?

2. How does this situation affect most of the people of El Salvador? How do you think they feel about this?

3. What powers does the junta have? The military?

4. Why is the military important to the wealthy landowners of El Salvador?

5. Why is it believed that the military really rules El Salvador? Why is it possible for the military to have this kind of power?

6. Why do you think so many of the people of El Salvador oppose the present government? Why would the peasants particularly oppose the government? The workers?

7. What other groups of people have joined with the peasants and workers? What do they hope to accomplish?

8. What action has been taken by the groups of people who are opposed to the government of El Salvador?

9. What have they accomplished?

10. Why have so many Catholic nuns and priests been active in helping the poor?

Day 2: Procedure

Distribute Activity Sheets One and Two and the information sheet on the political spectrum.

Have students work on Activity Sheet One as a means of review. The information sheet on political forces may be referred to if desired. After students have had sufficient time to complete the form, *ask* them to share answers and correct any errors. *Review* material on political spectrum information sheet with students. *Ask* students to explain in their

own words the differences between the Left, Right and Center. *Ask* them to indicate into which category the following groups should be placed: junta, church, opposition, military, oligarchy.

Distribute Activity Sheet Two and *divide* class into groups to work on Activity. *Emphasize* that reasons must be given for each opinion expressed. *Ask* students to report and share results. After discussion, students may summarize their opinions.

Major Political Forces in El Salvador

THE OLIGARCHY

In El Salvador, 2 per cent of the population owns more than 60 per cent of the arable land. This large portion of the land used to be owned and controlled by 14 families (popularly known as Los Catorce), but now this wealth has spread out to about 200 families. These wealthy landowners are known as the oligarchy of El Salvador. Its lands are mostly large plantations used for growing cash crops such as coffee, cotton and sugar, which are sold to other countries.

The oligarchy would like to keep its land. They want the military to defend their property against the many people who do not own land and want a share in the country's wealth.

THE GOVERNMENT

The current government of El Salvador has two parts: the military and the junta. As in many Latin American countries, the military is the strongest force in El Salvador's government.

The MILITARY is made up of the army and the security forces such as the National Guard. Historically, the military has defended the interests of the oligarchy. In 1932 thousands of peasants revolted because of the terrible conditions they were living under. They wanted a share of the oligarchy's land. They were led by a peasant named Farabundo Martí; 30,000 peasants were killed. The revolt was crushed by the military, beginning 50 years of military rule.

The JUNTA is the unelected ruling body of El Salvador. It makes the laws, decides how to spend government money and what rights the people will have. The current junta, made up of two military and three civilian members, came to power in January, 1980.*

*At this writing, the junta that gained ascendancy in March, 1980, is being superseded by a Constitutional Assembly. However, the same interests maintain power and are being represented now by even more right-wing leadership.

There are conflicting views of how the government of El Salvador works. The junta describes itself as the government of the country. It says it is working for peace and blames the opposition forces for the violence which is taking place. The Reagan administration, which supports the present government, shares this view.

The other view is that the military really rules the country through its control of political parties and juntas. Military leaders decide what should happen and the junta follows their direction. Both the military and the junta — with the support of the oligarchy — are seen as responsible for the violence. This view is held by the Opposition within El Salvador and by others, including some U.S. Congress members.

THE OPPOSITION

A large portion of El Salvador's population is opposed to the present government and would like to see a new government take power. Many of these people belong to organizations which are part of the Democratic Revolutionary Front or F.D.R. (Frente Democrático Revolucionario). Some of the leaders of the F.D.R. were part of the government of El Salvador before joining the opposition. They resigned their positions because they felt that the official government was not really committed to making changes which would benefit the poor. They also felt that the military really controlled the government, and was responsible for the deaths of innocent people.

The two largest groups in the F.D.R. are peasants and workers. Peasants have joined the Opposition because they are very poor and want some of their own land. Many workers are unhappy because their wages are low and they are not allowed to organize unions to improve conditions.

Other people have joined with the peasants and workers. These people include groups of teachers, students, priests, nuns and small business owners. Over 150 political groups belong to the F.D.R. They hope to take over the government and end the power of the oligarchy and the military while encouraging the active participation of people who are excluded from the present government.

The army of the F.D.R. is the F.M.L.N. (Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation). The people of the F.M.L.N. are often called guerrillas. The F.M.L.N. already controls large portions of El Salvador. In parts of these areas, medical clinics have been set up, people are being taught to read and write, and agricultural cooperatives are at work. Councils

have been formed to govern the areas.

The F.D.R. has been recognized by the governments of France and Mexico as a group which should have a part in discussions affecting the future of El Salvador.

THE CHURCH

More than 90 per cent of the population in El Salvador is Catholic. Many of the Catholic priests and nuns have been very active in helping the poor. These priests and nuns believe in what is called "liberation theology." They believe that Jesus Christ dedicated his life to helping poor people and that they should continue his work. They hold meetings to discuss the people's problems and to plan activities to solve the problems. Because these church members often criticize the government, they have been threatened and killed. In the last few years, a number of priests and nuns have been murdered, and many have been forced into exile.

One of those killed was Archbishop Oscar Romero, the most important church official in El Salvador. He was an outspoken supporter of the poor and an opponent of the government. In March, 1980, he was assassinated while celebrating mass in the main cathedral of San Salvador. As Father Nieto, a former parish priest who had to leave El Salvador because of threats on his life, has put it, "The Duarte regime has turned against the Catholic Church because it stands with the poor."

Not all members of the Church are concerned with improving the lives of the poor. There are conservative priests who support the oligarchy. There are also those who believe that the Church should concern itself only with religion and should stay out of worldly matters such as politics.

The Political Spectrum

News reports often use the terms LEFT, RIGHT and CENTER to describe political beliefs. In general, these terms represent people's feelings about a particular country and whether they want change in that society.

When talking about El Salvador, these terms are commonly used in the following way:

Left: The opposition. People who want the country's wealth and resources to be more equally divided. They want to make fundamental changes in the government to end the power of the military and the oligarchy. Many members of the

Left believe in Socialism.

Right: The military, the oligarchy and many members of the government. They believe the present distribution of land and wealth is best for El Salvador. They are fighting to keep the existing system.

Center: People who view both the Left and Right as too extreme. They may want to make some changes to improve socio-economic conditions, but they are not willing to totally change the government to do this.

Activity One

Based on your reading, identify the political force which is described in each statement. Then, fill in the blank in front of each statement with the correct abbreviation:

- OL — Oligarchy
- G — Government
- OP — Opposition
- CH — Church

- ___ 1. Its soldiers are often called guerrillas.
- ___ 2. Is supported by the U.S.
- ___ 3. Owns most of the land in El Salvador.
- ___ 4. Has often sided with the oligarchy.
- ___ 5. Is made up of many different organizations who want a new kind of government.
- ___ 6. The military is the most powerful part of this political force.
- ___ 7. Has a five-member ruling body.
- ___ 8. Use their farms to grow crops that are sold to other countries.
- ___ 9. Archbishop Romero belonged to this political force.
- ___ 10. Has in it former members of the government.

Activity Two

Below are some problems which exist in El Salvador. For each problem, a possible solution is given. As you know, the various political forces in El Salvador have very different ideas about how to solve the country's problems. Try to de-

cide how each political force would feel about the solution that is proposed. Decide if each political force would be **FOR** that solution, **AGAINST** that solution, or if it is **UNCLEAR** what the force's opinion would be. Then, explain **WHY** the group would have the opinion you assign to it. You must assign each political force an opinion on every problem and solution.

On a separate sheet of paper, make a chart similar to the one shown below for each of the problems.

1. PROBLEM: Most of the land in El Salvador is owned by a very small number of people.

SOLUTION: Take land away from the wealthy and distribute it to the peasants.

2. PROBLEM: The current government is unable to put an end to the unrest in the country.

SOLUTION: Give the military more power so that it can enforce order.

3. PROBLEM: The current government is unable to put an end to the country's unrest.

SOLUTION: Establish a new form of government in which peasants and workers share power equally with the wealthy.

4. PROBLEM: Many people in El Salvador don't have enough money to feed themselves.

SOLUTION: People should stop protesting and work harder. This will increase production and everyone will be better off.

5. PROBLEM: Many people in El Salvador don't have enough money to feed themselves.

SOLUTION: The government should spend less money on the army and more on programs to help the poor.

6. PROBLEM: El Salvador is not producing enough food to feed its people.

SOLUTION: Use the land for planting beans, corn and rice to use in El Salvador rather than coffee, cotton and sugar for export.

7. PROBLEM: Many priests and nuns who support the poor have been killed.

SOLUTION: The leaders of the Church should stick to religion and stay out of politics.

	FOR	AGAINST	UNCLEAR	WHY?
OLIGARCHY				
GOVERNMENT				
OPPOSITION				
CHURCH				

Resources to counter the misinformation prevalent about Central America are listed

Resources

CENTRAL AMERICA

Organizations:

Amnesty International, 304 W. 58 St., New York, N.Y. 10019; (212) 582-4440.

Data Center, 464 19 St., Oakland, Cal. 94612; (415) 835-4692.

Ecumenical Project for Inter-American Communication and Action (EPICA), 1470 Irving St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20010.

H.A.N.D., 1718 20 St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009.

Latin American Working Group (LAWG), Box 2207, Station P, Toronto M5S 2T2, Ontario, Canada.

Maryknoll Sisters, Desk of Social Concern, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545; (914) 941-7575.

North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA), 151 W. 19 St., 9th floor, New York, N.Y. 10011; (212) 989-8890.

OXFAM-America, 302 Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass. 02116.

Religious Task Force on Central America, 1747 Connecticut Ave., Washington, D.C., 20009; (202) 387-7652.

Women's International Resource Exchange (WIRE), 2700 Broadway, Room 7, New York, N.Y. 10025; (212) 666-4622.

Printed Materials:

"Central America: No Road Back," *NACLA Report*, May-June, 1981 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

"Central America: The Strongmen Are Shaking," *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. VII, Nos. 2 & 3, Spring-Summer, 1980 (CMS, P.O. Box 792, Riverside, Cal. 92502; \$5).

Central America Update, bi-monthly (LAWG, see above; \$8 for six issues).

Cry of the People by Penny Lernoux (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980).

Indigenous World/El Mundo Indigena, quarterly (Professor Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, Native American Studies, California State University, Hayward, Cal.).

"Latin American Women," *NACLA Report*, Sept.-Oct., 1980 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

Films:

Americas in Transition presents U.S. in-

volvement in Central and Latin American affairs in the 20th century. Ed Asner, narrator. 16 mm, 29 min., color, \$50 rental (Americas in Transition, 401 West Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012).

Slide Show:

"Central America: Roots of the Crisis," 133 slides with tapescript and printed materials, 25 min., 1981. (Available from American Friends Service Committee, Latin American Program, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102; \$50.)

BELIZE

Printed Material:

The Belize Issue, by London Latin American Bureaus (P.O. Box 134, London NW1 4JY, England; 1978).

EL SALVADOR

Organizations:

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), National Office, P.O. Box 12056, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202) 887-5019. Regional offices: *Midwest Region*, 5001 Evergreen, Dearborn, Mich. 48128, (313) 593-4630; *South Central Region*, P.O. Box 8407, University of Texas Station, Austin, Tex. 78712, (512) 477-4728; *Southwest Region*, P.O. Box 57337, Los Angeles, Cal. 90057, (213) 623-7176; *Northwest Region*, 3410 19 St., San Francisco, Cal. 94110, (415) 861-0425; *Mid-Atlantic Region*, 19 W. 21 St., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10010, (212) 242-1040; *New England Region*, 1151 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138, (617) 492-8699; *South-east Region*, P.O. Box 249173, Coral Gables, Fla. 33124, (305) 661-8358.

Materials below that are available from CISPES are marked *.

Printed Materials:

Archbishop Romero — Martyr of El Salvador, by Placido Erdozain, 98 pp. (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545; 1981; \$4.95 paper).

El Salvador Alert! monthly, subscription \$5/6 months, \$10/year.*

El Salvador: Background to the Crisis

(CAMINO-Central American Information Office, 1151 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138; 1982).

El Salvador: Central America in the Cold War, ed. Marvin E. Gettleman, Patrick Lacefield, Louis Menashe, Ronald Radosh, David Mermelstein (N.Y.: Grove Press; 1981).

El Salvador: The Face of Revolution, by Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk (South End Press, 302 Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass. 02116; 1982; \$7.50).

El Salvador: The Hungriest People in Latin America, by Action Alert, Institute for Food and Development Policy, 4 pp. (Food First, IFDP, 2588 Mission St., San Francisco, Cal. 94110).

"El Salvador — A Revolution Brews," *NACLA Report*, July-Aug., 1980 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

El Salvador Packet, by Amnesty International. 70-page documentation on violations of human rights (AIUSA, 304 W. 58 St., New York, N.Y. 10019; \$2.50).

"El Salvador — Why Revolution?," *NACLA Report*, March-April 1980 (NACLA, see above, \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

"Genocide in El Salvador," by Vicente Navarro, *Monthly Review*, April, 1981.

Introductory Packet (\$1.50 plus 50¢ postage)*.

Report on Human Rights in El Salvador, compiled by America's Watch Committee and the American Civil Liberties Union (N.Y.: Vintage Press; 1982; \$3.95).

Report on El Salvador, by Religious Task Force on El Salvador (Religious Task Force, P.O. Box 53391, Washington, D.C. 20009; Nov.-Dec., 1980; \$2.25 plus 50¢ postage).

U.S. Military Involvement in El Salvador, 1947-1980 (\$1.25 plus 25¢ postage)*.

Women and War in El Salvador, resource packet, Women's International Resource Exchange (2700 Broadway, Room 7, New York, N.Y. 10025; \$2.25 plus 50¢ postage).

Films:

"El Salvador: Another Vietnam" examines the current political crisis in El Salvador and the role of U.S. intervention, 16mm, 50 min.; "El Salvador: The Seeds of Liberty" focuses on the deaths of four U.S. missionaries and the

role of the church in El Salvador, 16mm, 28 min. (both from Icarus Films, 200 Park Ave. So., New York, N.Y. 10003, (212) 674-3375.

"El Salvador: The People Will Win," a chronology of 500 years of people's struggle against imperialism, colonialism and most recently, a brutal military dictatorship. 16 mm or video, 63 min., color, Spanish or Spanish with English subtitles (Communal, Box 113, Bronx, N.Y. 10468; (212) 777-2341; rental \$200 negotiable).

"Revolution or Death," documentary covering the rise of the military dictatorship in El Salvador, the role of the U.S. and the development of the popular movement. 16 mm, 48 min. (UNIFILM, 419 Park Ave. So., New York, N.Y. 10016, (212) 686-9890).

Slide Show:

Project R.E.A.L., an outreach program of the Stanford Latin American Studies Center, has produced a slide show on El Salvador focusing on land use in rural areas (for further information, contact Kathie Toland, c/o Project R.E.A.L., Lou Henry Hoover, Rm. 226, Stanford, Cal. 94305, (415) 497-1114).

GUATEMALA

Organizations:

Committee in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, 19 W. 21 St., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10010.

National Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) 1718 20th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Materials listed that are available from NISGUA are marked †.

Printed Materials:

Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala, by Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer (New York: Doubleday, 1982).

Dollar Diplomacy, by Scott Nearing and Joseph Freedman (New York: Monthly Review Press; 1966, 1969 [o.p.]).

Green Revolution, special issue on Guatemala (*Green Revolution*, P.O. Box 3233, York, Pa. 17402; n.d.; \$1.50).

Guatemala, eds. Susan Jonas and David Tobis (NACLA, see above; \$9.75 plus \$1.25 postage and handling).

Guatemala: Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win, by Concerned Guatemala Scholars (CGS, P.O. Box 270, Wyckoff Heights Station, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11237; n.d.; \$3).

Guatemala: A Government Program of Political Murder, by Amnesty International, 32 pp. (Amnesty International, 304 W. 58 St., New York, N.Y. 10019; 1981; \$3.95 paper).

Guatemala! The Horror and the Hope, ed. Rarihokwats (\$6; Four Arrows, P.O. Box 3233, York, Pa. 17402).

Guatemala: Occupied Country, by Eduardo Galeano (New York: Monthly Review Press; 1969 [o.p.]).

Guatemala: Repression and Resistance, 1979 report of National Lawyers' Guild and La Raza Legal Alliance (National Lawyers' Guild, 853 Broadway, Room 1705, New York,

N.Y. 10003).

Packet on campaign against religious repression (\$3).†

"Terror and Violence as Weapons of Counterinsurgency in Guatemala," by Gabriel Aguilera Peralta, *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. VIII, Nos. 2-3, 1980.

Tourism Boycott Packet, information on repression of unions (\$3).†

Radio Documentary:

"Guatemala: Prelude to a Struggle," 30 or 60 min. transcript, \$3; 30 min. cassette, \$8; 60 min. cassette, \$12 (The Public Media Foundation, 15 Pleasant Place, Cambridge, Mass. 02139).

Slide Show:

"Guatemala: A People Besieged," taped script and printed materials. 160 slides, 28 min., 1978 (American Friends Service Committee, Latin American Program, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19102; \$55).

HONDURAS

Printed Materials:

"Honduras: On the Border of War," *NACLA Report*, Nov.-Dec., 1981 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

The War of the Dispossessed, by Thomas P. Anderson (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press; 1981).

NICARAGUA

Organizations:

Casa Nicaragua, 2121 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90006.

Casa Nicaragua, 19 W. 21 St., 2nd fl., New York, N.Y. 10010.

Casa Nicaragua, 3015 24th St., San Francisco, Cal. 94110.

National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People (NNSNP), 1718 20 St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Materials below that are available from NNSNP are marked **.

Printed Materials:

"Batling Sexism Remains a Key Task — Nicaraguan Women Demand Rights," by Harry Fried, *Guardian*, Dec. 2, 1981.

"Crisis in Nicaragua," *NACLA Report*, Nov.-Dec., 1978 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

Guardians of the Dynasty: A History of the U.S.-Created Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua and the Somoza Family, by Richard Millett (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545; 1977).

Health Care in the New Nicaragua (\$1).**

Look! A New Thing in the Americas! The Church and Revolution in Nicaragua, by Peter Hinde, Order of Carmelites; ed. by William Callahan, S.J. (Quixote Center, P.O. Box 651, Hyattsville, Md. 20782; 1981; \$1).

The Loss of Fear: Education in Nicaragua Before and After the Revolution (Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign of London, 20-21 Compton Terrace, London NI 2UN, England; 1980; \$3.25 plus postage).

Nicaragua Fact Sheets (50¢ a set).**

Nicaragua, June 1978-July 1979, by Susan Meiselas, 72 photographs with text and chronology (New York: Pantheon Books; 1980).

Nicaragua Network Newsletter (subscription \$5/yr.).**

Nicaraguan Women and the Revolution, resource packet (Women's International Resource Exchange, see above; \$2.25 plus 50¢ postage).

Nicaragua: A People's Revolution by EPICA Task Force (EPICA, 1470 Irving St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010; 1980; \$4.25 plus 75¢ postage).

Nicaragua in Revolution, ed. Thomas W. Walker (New York: Praeger Publishers; 1982).

Nicaragua in Revolution: The Poets Speak, bilingual anthology of poetry, with chronology, notes, bibliography and photographs. 312 pp.**

"Nicaragua's Revolution," *NACLA Report*, May-June, 1980 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

"Revolution within the Revolution — Nicaragua: A Struggle for Dignity," by Margaret Randall, *Guardian*, Spring, 1982 (Women's Day Supplement).

"The Role of Women in the Nicaraguan Revolution," by Susan E. Ramirez-Horton, in *Nicaragua in Revolution* (cited above).

Sandino's Daughters: Testimonies of Nicaraguan Women in Struggle, by Margaret Randall (Vancouver, B.C., Canada: New Star Books; 1981).

Films:

"*Thank God and the Revolution*" discusses the role of the Catholic Church in the Nicaraguan Revolution. 16 mm, 50 min., color, Spanish with English subtitles (\$75 rental).**

"*Women in Arms*" is about the role of women in the Nicaraguan revolution. 16 mm., 59 min., color, Spanish or English (Hudson River Productions, P.O. Box 515, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417).

Cassette:

"Revolutionary Nicaragua," covers the history of Nicaragua, the Revolution, after the victory. Interviews, music, poetry. Four-hour series in three segments. (National Federal Community Broadcasters, 1314 14th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005; \$5 each cassette).

Slide show:

"Nicaragua: The Challenge of Revolution," 139 slides, cassette, tapescript, 23 min. (\$60 purchase, \$15 rental).**

PANAMA

Printed Materials:

"Panama: For Whom the Canal Tolls?," *NACLA Report*, Sept.-Oct., 1979 (NACLA, see above; \$3 plus 75¢ postage).

PANAMA: Sovereignty For a Land Divided, by EPICA Task Force (EPICA, 1470 Irving St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20010; 1976).

In the BOOKSHELF, a regular *Bulletin* feature, all books that relate to minority themes are evaluated by members of the minority group depicted.—Editors.

Amy Goes Fishing

by Joan Marzollo,
illustrated by Ann Schweninger.
Dial, 1980,
\$2.25 (paper), 56 pages, grades p.s.-3

This is an easy-to-read, quiet, low-keyed story about a young girl who goes fishing with her father. In spite of two mishaps (Amy becomes so absorbed in fishing that she falls in the lake and her father brings a bag of garbage instead of lunch), they have a really nice time together. Amy catches a fish and learns some fishing techniques.

The relationship between father and daughter is portrayed with quiet humor and understanding, as is their relationship with Sam, an older man who is also fishing.

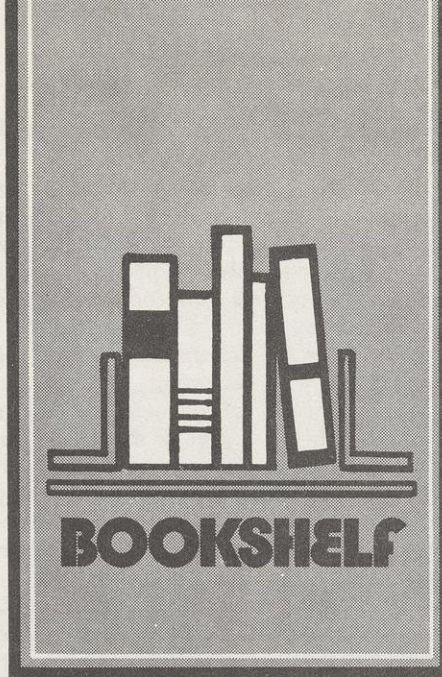
The illustrations are simple and complement the text. The story moves well and is clearly told. The one sour note in an otherwise praiseworthy book is that Amy looks forward to her mother cooking the fish she has caught (after she has worked all day!). Still, this is a commendable beginning reader. [Sally Smith]

Politics: How to Get Involved

by Dorothy Levenson.
Franklin Watts, 1980,
\$6.90, 87 pages, grades 5-up

This very practical guide encourages young people to speak out and get involved in politics, even if they are too young to vote. It urges them to challenge the status quo and work for changes, particularly those that will impact their daily lives.

The book cites cases where elementary and high school students have worked against sex discrimination in athletic programs, helped elect political candidates, fought for civil rights and demonstrated against government policies. The author also reviews judicial decisions that have affirmed students' First



Amendment rights to such actions. For example, in the case *Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District*, the court ruled against a principal who suspended students for wearing black armbands to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Other courts have stated that students may distribute political literature on school grounds and may opt to refrain from saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Levenson makes many concrete suggestions to help young people become involved—becoming aware of issues, working for a local Congressperson or Senator as an intern, writing letters and working on political campaigns. There are hints on how to speak before a school board, and an example of a high school student who was elected to the school committee.

Accompanying photographs show young people in action, but several include some of our nation's least respected and reactionary leaders—former Governor George Wallace and former President Richard Nixon. Very few Black children and no Black leaders are presented in the photos.

Equally serious, the book provides insufficient information on the "less acceptable," more radical forms of political action. It mentions nothing about organizing protests, sit-ins and demonstrations. It also does not consider the young people's power as consumers to boycott products made by companies with unacceptable policies.

When discussing working for political candidates, the author focuses only on

the Democrats and Republicans; third parties are dismissed with the statement, "Smaller parties exist . . . they usually don't have much luck in state or national elections." At times, the book takes an idealistic look at the democratic process.

In short, the book makes a strong and valuable statement: that young people have the power to change our world. However, it only advocates change through acceptable "status quo" channels, and does not acknowledge that many feel that change must be more universal and revolutionary. It also offers no suggestions for young people who find that proceeding along the acceptable legal channels does not work. [Jan M. Goodman]

Ramona Quimby, Age 8

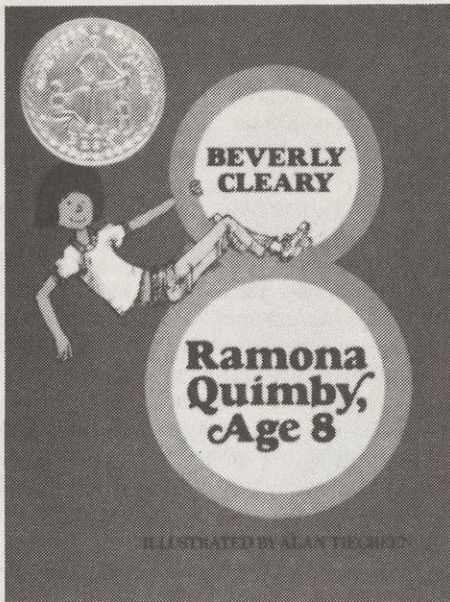
by Beverly Cleary,
illustrated by Alan Tiegreen.
Morrow, 1981,
\$7.95, 190 pages, grades 3-7

I was not enthusiastic about this book, which marks Cleary's 25th anniversary as a successful children's author. But remembering how thoroughly I enjoyed Cleary's books when I was a child, I brought the book to my classroom of third and fourth graders—and they loved it! The author's gift is that she can plug into the minds of young children, identify with and accurately present their problems, issues and concerns. As an adult, I had missed that.

To the author's credit, this is a story of a working-class family. Issues of financial hardship, usually ignored in children's literature, are mentioned as a regular part of the Quimbys' daily life. Mr. Quimby, a cashier at a local supermarket, is planning to work part-time and go to college to study to become an art teacher. Thus, Mrs. Quimby, a receptionist, becomes the primary supporter of the family.

Ramona's concerns are typical for her age. She understands that the family will have to "cut back," but she is supportive of her father's return to college, even though she is sad that she will get less attention from him.

The Quimbys are presented realistically. The parents—who are both caring, yet firm—do not always get along, and



they are concerned about making ends meet. Ramona and her sister are sometimes enemies, sometimes allies against their parents. Ramona both accepts and resents her responsibilities within the family.

At one point, the fad at school is to bring a hard-boiled egg in your lunchbox and crack it open on your head. Ramona, to her misfortune, cracks a raw egg on her head and is humiliated. As a teacher, I thought, "This is ridiculous. What a pain in the neck that child would be in my classroom." My students found that incident absolutely delightful. Again, this is the author's gift. (The book was recently named a Newbery Honor Book.) [Jan M. Goodman]

The Ten-Woman Bicycle

by Tricia Vita,
illustrated by Marion Crezee.
Sheba Feminist Publishing Co.
(distributed by Southern
Distribution, 27 Clerkenwell Close,
London EC1, England), 1980,
£1.25, 29 pages, grades 2-6

This is a short feminist tale of working women who use ingenuity and cooperation to overcome problems. The author tells of ten turn-of-the-century women who work in a bicycle factory but are not allowed to use the very product that they make. The women design their own ten-woman bicycle and successfully outwit

the villagers who are outraged at the thought of women riding bicycles. This is not a philosophical tome nor is it an analysis of working women's problems, but it is a fun story with a welcome message of cooperation.

The book has a number of strengths, one being the charming 19th century style illustrations. They add much to the book and begin to give us an idea of why women took to the bicycle with such enthusiasm. The sense of freedom the bicycle gave to women bound by convention (and clothing styles) comes through very strongly in the illustrations.

The Ten-Woman Bicycle is definitely not great children's literature; indeed, both the writing and the story line are somewhat rough in spots. It is, however, fun and can also be used as a springboard for discussion on a variety of topics ranging from women's clothing, women and work and how technology has the potential to change our lives. [Patricia B. Campbell]

Like Everybody Else

by Barbara Girion.
Scribners, 1980,
\$8.95, 169 pages, grades 4-7

Samantha Gold, twelve-and-a-half, flat-chested, short and thin, is an only child about to start junior high school in a New Jersey suburb. Not only does she have routine worries—like new braces and decisions about what to wear for the first day of school, but she has special worries—like having a mother who is a well-known children's book writer and ignores household affairs and a father who wears an apron while cooking frozen food dinners. And neither parent is paying any attention to preparations for her upcoming bat mitzvah party. Then, when mother writes a sizzling, adult best-seller about a married suburban New Jersey couple involved in lots of extra-marital affairs, Samantha's misery is boundless.

Meanwhile, her best friend's family of four children and a mother devoted to color-matched accessories, cooking and the PTA, makes Samantha's home appear even more wanting. And a crisis in school, caused by Samantha's first crush on a boy who is more taken with an ultra-nasty, ultra-popular other girl, also reaches its high point of misery. Home life starts unravelling when Mom stops

writing and attempts homemaking. Eventually, all is well again as Samantha matures to realize that all kinds of women are okay, and that it is not necessary for her mother or herself to be just *Like Everybody Else*.

The book is slick and funny. The older characters are exaggerated and totally unconvincing. The author's strength is in her knowledge of the concerns and mores of upper-middle-class suburban kids. Scenes about how girls decide what clothes to wear, and cafeteria games and rituals are gems, though the general scene depicted seems to be closer to suburbia the way it was 20 years ago, than what exists today. [Lyla Hoffman]

A Shadow Like a Leopard

by Myron Levoy.
Harper & Row, 1981,
\$8.95, 184 pages, grades 6-up

After reading the first words of the jacket text ("Ramon Santiago is a 14-year-old street punk and a poet") this reviewer was tempted to put the book down. And the jacket talks about the "unorthodox friendship" between Ramon and Arnold Glasser, a seventy-six-year-old artist, which suggested the well-worn missionary theme ("Why, oh, why," I lamented, "is it always a white person who gets our kids out of trouble?").

The first few pages of the book convinced me of its merit. (After all, book jackets are written by ad people, not authors.) This novel is extremely well-written; this is particularly evident in those episodes which quite easily could have degenerated into sentimental clichés. And in spite of the seriousness of the content, the author knows exactly where to inject bits of humor.

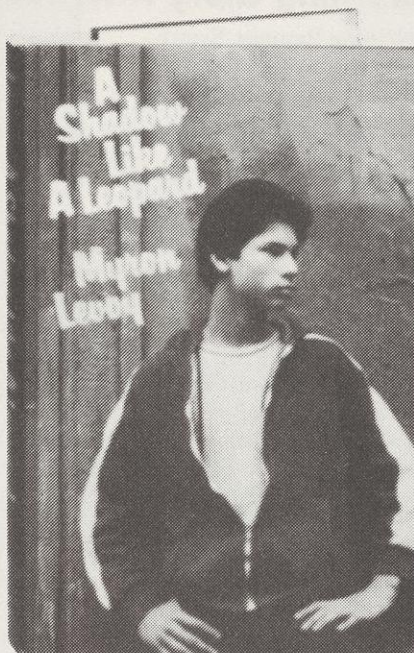
The book has other notable features. It portrays Ramon, a Puerto Rican youth living on New York's Upper West Side, in an appealing and sensitive manner. Ramon is a street kid, a hustler with morals (he hustles a full meal from a sympathetic waitress but leaves her a large tip, explaining, "I'm broke for restaurants, not people"). Above all, Ramon is a "survivor" with a strong sense of self-esteem whether he's hustling Glasser's paintings on Fifth Avenue or using his knife to protect himself.

The relationship between Ramon (whom Glasser calls "punk") and Glasser (whom Ramon calls "loco viejo") is a complex one. No case of one-way salvation here. Glasser is suffering from extreme depression and Ramon is confronting problems too complicated for his years. In fact, Ramon seems the stronger of the two ("The man was as poor as he was. Maybe poorer, because he couldn't hustle at all anymore. He was too old."). Clearly, there is a mutual dependency and reliance here. The passage in which Ramon and Glasser develop a grudging, shouting, conflict-ridden but respecting relationship is a classic.

The book does not escape some pitfalls. Certainly the fact that Ramon's father is in Attica for having assaulted a policeman during a Puerto Rico independence rally suggests that he has a sense of self-respect and self-determination. Nevertheless, we are constantly reminded of the father's machismo in ways both direct and indirect: "To be macho was good. It was necessary. His father had said it again and again." Or, when he criticizes his son for writing poetry: "Sissy! Girl! Writing foolish things in a book." Machismo is a fact of Puerto Rican culture, but so is poetry. Pitting them as opposites negates this reality. Since Ramon's mother is in the hospital for a nervous breakdown and thus does not provide a positive counterbalance, one is forced to view Glasser, foibles and all, as the "significant other" in Ramon's life. It leaves one with the uncomfortable feeling of respecting the shoot without the roots. At the end, Ramon's father vows, "No more anger. No more temper," as if there were no legitimate place for justified anger, particularly in an independence movement. Thus, the one positive aspect of his character—his will to fight for freedom—is decimated.

There are a few other negative details, but they are just that. For example, Ramon always talks about his mother as "My mamá . . ." and there is the way in which Ramon is referred to by white people he encounters ("He's ethnic minority; leave him alone."). In both instances, the use of language is simply not credible.

The story has so many positive features, however, that it clearly deserves to be read by young adolescents. All characters are presented as struggling in situations which are at times overwhelming. Yet each and every one of



them emerges with some degree of dignity. This is no fairy tale; Ramon does not live happily every after. But in the last scene, he resolves to determine his own future: "Maybe I'll go to school. And maybe I won't. Maybe I'll really write. And maybe I won't. Maybe I'll even paint. Or sell paintings. Or join Papá in that Puerto Rico stuff. Or maybe I won't. But it's gonna be me, man. Me!"

Ramon has taken the first step—defining himself in a hostile environment. One is left feeling that he will take many more steps before he is through. [Sonia Nieto]

Moonsong Lullaby

by Jamake Highwater,
photographs by Marcia Keegan.
Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981,
\$8.95, unpagged, grades p.s.-3

Jamake Highwater's new picture book—a bedtime lullaby for a Native child—is about the night. "Listen carefully, child. The moon is . . . singing, singing to the People of the campfire. . . . Our men are home from the hunt with the mighty deer who died for us today. . . . The Moon sings across the mountains as our mothers cook over our many fires." The text sometimes carries the strength and beauty of life lived in tune with our Mother Earth; sometimes it simply

seems forced. Many of the photographs are truly lovely.

Unfortunately, the book is marred by a certain inattention to detail. "Rabbit and Fox dream in their burrows. . . . High in the sky a lone hawk circles, tirelessly praising the moonlight." In fact, rabbits and foxes are mostly out and around at night, and hawk is a hunter by day. Also, the photographs do not follow the time sequence of the text. The first one shows full night, with the moon coming up. Thereafter, various times of day are represented, from dusk to late afternoon and sundown, to night and back again. In the final illustration, the moon, unnaturally large, appears on the left, but the light is clearly coming from the right, giving an unearthly effect that is not in keeping with the mood of the book.

Sometimes the words and pictures are incongruous. One page reads: ". . . the great Elk . . . listens to the humming, humming, quiet strumming of the Moon's silver wings." The accompanying picture shows an elk (with a rather dopey expression) in a sunlit field. Children do notice this sort of thing and are bothered by it, and it certainly detracts from the effectiveness of the book. More careful editing could have eliminated these flaws from a work that is basically appealing and would otherwise have been very appropriate bedtime reading for both Native and non-Native children. [Doris Seale]

Oh, Boy! Babies!

by Alison Cragin Herzig
and Jane Lawrence Mali,
photographs by Jane Lawrence Mali.
Little, Brown, 1980,
\$9.95, 106 pages, grades 4-8

Oh, Boy! Babies! is a humorous, often touching book which chronicles the experiences of ten fifth- and sixth-grade boys who elect to take a course on baby care at a private boys' school. Though at first the boys are embarrassed about their choice and skeptical about peer reactions, they become absorbed in a class which is soon one of the most popular electives in the school.

The book includes many of the boys' comments as they learn how to wash, feed, diaper, dress, talk to and play with babies. "Taking care of babies is much

harder than I thought it would be," states one boy. "All those little details that don't seem important, but are." Comments such as these lend insight into the difficult responsibility of parenting a very young child. As another boy notes, "If you drop 'em, you're dead."

The text is accompanied by many fine, sensitive photographs which portray the hard times, the fun times and the boys' enjoyment of the babies. As the class progresses, the boys think seriously about their future roles as fathers and their interest in sharing responsibility for baby care. They also consider the more immediate possibilities of becoming babysitters and being involved in other child-caring roles.

A drawback to the book is that it presents a limited experience in a middle-class setting. The boys are all white and well-dressed; the school is posh and well-equipped; the mothers are flexible enough to deliver their babies to the classroom and pick them up later that day.

However, the book is soundly anti-sexist. Recent efforts have been made to present fathers and other males in nurturing roles in children's literature. *Oh, Boy! Babies!* goes a step further, offering these roles as positive options to children at an impressionable age, when peer pressure to conform to sex stereotypes is heightening and pre-adolescent boys firmly hesitate to do "girls' stuff."

The book can also serve as a curriculum guide. It inspired me to begin a "Baby Care" mini-course in my urban public school. Starting next week, one woman will bring her baby to school. We'll put the baby on our classroom meeting rug, and a mixed group of male and female third and fourth graders will learn to care for the child. I am sure that it will be a valuable experience for all. Without this book, the idea never would have occurred to me. [Jan M. Goodman]



Morning Glory Afternoon

by Irene Bennett Brown.
Atheneum, 1981,
\$9.95, 224 pages, grades 5-9

It is 1924. Seventeen-year-old Jessie Faber, overwhelmed with grief and guilt over the accidental death of her boyfriend, moves to another town in an attempt to escape her feelings. She goes to Ardenville, Kansas, where she gets a job as the telephone operator. She quickly learns that her job requires much more than placing calls. She must deal with unpleasantness, some badgering, emergencies and general problems.

At first, Ardenville seems to be the perfect town, and Jessie is sure she will be happy there. All too soon, Ardenville's ugliness erupts. One evening a house where Greek orphans live burns down. There is no doubt the fire was deliberately set. But by whom? And why? On another occasion two children disappear from their home. They are Irish. People stop shopping in the store owned by a Jewish man. Joe Cooke is barred from buying the blacksmith shop. Joe Cooke is Black.

Though Jessie tries to deny the truth, she finally must admit that the Ku Klux Klan is active in Ardenville, beating, harassing and even murdering anyone who is not white, Protestant and "all-American." The leader is none other than the town's mayor and richest citizen—Lombard Hale.

With the help of her new friend, Lilli, Jessie tries to fight the Klan. But when she realizes she might endanger not only herself but others, she once again decides the way to deal with the problem is to escape. But the ordeals and problems she has faced in Ardenville have strengthened her to fight Lombard Hale and the Klan. She stops running, for she learns that running can not drive away pain, sorrow and fear. Feelings and beliefs must be faced head on. Through Jessie's courage, the whole town learns what has been going on. Lombard Hale is finally exposed and isolated.

The three main women characters in the book are depicted in what are traditionally considered male roles: one woman owns the telephone company, another the cafe, another a boarding house. It is the women who speak out and act against the goings on in Ardenville while the men follow the evil Lombard Hale. (Nevertheless, the "happily-ever-

after" ending has suitable husbands found for all three.)

Though the author clearly wished to expose and put down the Klan by describing its local leader as a sick bigot, this is both historically incorrect and a disservice to today's youth. The Klan had five million members in the 1920's and was politically powerful in both the North and the South. It was not led by a few bigots, but reflected the racism of the society at large. Today, too, the Klan is growing, and it is busily recruiting young children. Today's children should learn the true history of past and present racism in this country. That is the only way to successfully defeat both the violent and the more genteel racists. [Emily Moore]

Marty McGee's Space Lab, No Girls Allowed

written and illustrated
by Martha Alexander.
Dial, 1981,
\$7.50, unpagged, grades p.s.-3

This story is based on—and exploits—the traditional battle of the sexes. Here the youngest female wins out.

Older brother Marty has a sign on his door, "Space Lab, No Girls Allowed." When he tells his sister Rachel to stay out because he is working on a space helmet, Rachel complains to her toddler sister, Jenny. Later, when she is alone, Jenny cleverly climbs out of her play pen, goes into the "lab" and puts on the special helmet. She waves her musical rattle and soars into the air, out the window and through the sky. When she returns, Marty wants to learn what made the flight possible. Before telling him the secret, the girls get him to change the sign on his door to read "Captain Marty McGee's Space Lab. Pilots—Jenny and Rachel." In the end, however, the rattle doesn't work for him—he's too heavy.

This little story, while imaginative, focuses on male-female vindictiveness throughout. Even when Marty changes his sign, he refers to his sisters as "you girls," and Rachel is snide to him. The illustrations are attractive, but Rachel seems inappropriately dressed in a dress and party shoes. This "cute" picture book, while clever and attractive, is a poor model for young children. [Sally Smith]

Title IX in Danger— Support Needed

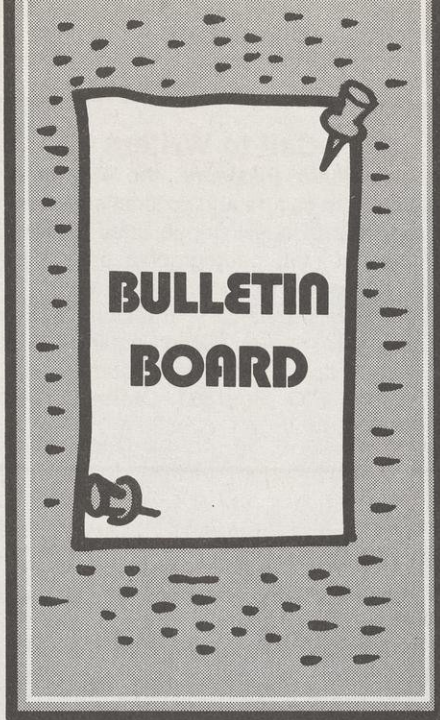
Much of the information in the following news brief came from the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education, a group of approximately 50 national, non-governmental organizations working together on a broad range of issues affecting the rights and opportunities of women and girls in elementary, secondary, post-secondary and vocational education. For more information on the Coalition, write Barbara Stein, Human and Civil Rights Division, National Education Association, 1201 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. For more information on a Title IX Watch, write PEER, 1112 13th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

This July, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972—which prohibits sex discrimination in any educational program receiving federal financial assistance—celebrates its tenth birthday. As Title IX's birthday draws near, it is appropriate to assess its impact and the roles that it might play in the future.

The situation is perhaps best covered by the old line, "I've got some good news and some bad news." The good news is that Title IX is working and is working well—not perhaps to the extent that workers for educational equity hoped but certainly much better than we feared.

Sexism still exists in elementary, high school and post-secondary education but most of the worst rules discriminating against girls and women are gone. Some counselors might still suggest that girls go into sex-segregated occupations, but they no longer are assisted by pink and blue vocational inventories that steered boys toward careers as doctors, executives and airline pilots while they pushed girls with the same interests into nursing, housekeeping and flight attendant school. Gone are the "girls only" required home ec courses and the "boys only" required shop (in many places, girls and boys take both home ec and shop, so that both can learn about running a home). Gone, too, are the admission requirements which set much higher standards for young women than for young men. No longer can the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell require women to have SAT scores 30 to 40 points higher than men's. Quotas that allowed the admittance of 50 per cent of the male but only 25 per cent of the female applicants to the University of North Carolina are also no longer with us.

Title IX has brought other changes as



well. Pregnant teenage girls were previously kicked out of school as soon as they started to "show," which virtually condemned them to dead end jobs or public assistance. Now, pregnant teens can not be forced to leave school or to go to special programs.

Title IX has had the greatest impact on school athletics. In the past ten years, participation by women in inter-collegiate sports has increased by 25 per cent; the percent of high school varsity athletes who are young women has increased from 7 per cent in 1972 to 35 per cent in 1981. The average budget for women's athletics has increased from 2 per cent of the total in 1972 to 16.4 per cent in 1980. Girls and women are playing sports and participating in athletics in ever increasing numbers, and a recent Harris poll showed that 93 per cent of

To Our Readers

Our apologies to readers who were unable to locate the CIBC staff at the June 12 disarmament demonstration in New York City. We regret that the demonstration organizers changed meeting locations at the last minute and are sorry to have missed you. Meanwhile, Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) — with whom we marched — is growing rapidly. Persons interested in joining or organizing local chapters should write to ESR National Headquarters, Box 1041, Brookline, Mass. 02147.

parents of high school students want their sons and daughters to participate in sports.

There is nonetheless still much to be done. In vocational education programs, for example, most young women are still enrolled in either clerical programs that lead to low-paying jobs or in home economics programs that rarely lead to paid employment. In spite of significant gains in athletics, girls and women are still not near achieving equity. Teachers and counselors still often discourage women and men from entering non-traditional fields or from taking non-traditional courses.

The bad news is that Title IX may be done away with or seriously weakened. The Department of Education is considering changing Title IX regulations to exclude student loan programs from "federal financial assistance," thus exempting a large number of colleges from Title IX coverage. They are also considering lifting the requirement that recipients of federal aid sign a statement that they are in compliance with Title IX, with Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race or national origin) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability). Current court cases will determine if Title IX covers athletics, if it covers employees, what remedies are available if Title IX is found to be violated and how "federal financial assistance" should be defined.

A serious threat to Title IX also occurred when Senator Orin Hatch of Utah introduced a congressional bill to seriously weaken Title IX. However, a combination of factors, including an outpouring of support for Title IX from people in Utah and throughout the country, caused him to withdraw his support for the bill. On a more positive note, the House of Representatives introduced a resolution, co-sponsored by over 100 representatives, that urges that the Title IX guidelines not be repealed or altered in any manner. Resolutions supporting Title IX have also been passed by a number of state and city legislative bodies.

If people continue to fight for Title IX it will be saved, and we can get on with the business of giving our young people the best, most equitable education possible. If we don't join the fight, Title IX can be lost and we will go back, at least in part, to the not-so-good old days. Title IX deserves a happy birthday; let's see that it gets it. [Patricia B. Campbell]

CIBC Introduces Model Curriculum

On April 21, the Council unveiled its model reading curriculum at a workshop for educational publishers. The workshop was to acquaint publishers with the concepts and teaching strategies of Project EMBERS, the "mini-basal readers," a two-year project funded by the Women's Educational Equity Act (see Vol. 13, No. 1). Publishers and senior editors of the American Book Company, Ginn and Company, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Macmillan, McGraw-Hill, Open Court and Prentice-Hall attended. They heard Project EMBERS staff explain how the materials were designed to serve as a model both to improve children's reading competency and to promote children's understanding of social and educational inequities based on sex, race and disability. The publishers were also shown audio-visuals of the results of evaluation tests of the model materials in 26 classrooms of 18 schools around the country.

Associated Press education writer Lee Mitgang attended. A story he filed, lauding the workshop and describing the favorable response of the publishers, was picked up by newspapers and news broadcasts across the country. These sample headlines indicate the positive reception by the news media: "New Textbooks Oppose Sexism and Racism" (*Miami Herald*); "Publishers Like Grade-School Texts That Emphasize Acceptance of Those Who Are Different" (*Kansas City Times*). Subsequently, features about Project EMBERS appeared in several metropolitan newspapers and educational journals (*Education of the Handicapped*, *Report on Education Research* April 28, *Education Week* May 5 and *Educational Marketer* May 10). These stories stimulated considerable interest in the project.

Jack Kleinman, an executive of the National Education Association, representing 1.7 million teachers, participated in the workshop. He proposed that the readers, developed as model supplementary materials for grades 3 and 5, be expanded for grades K-6. The curriculum now consists of an anthology of readings and a teacher's manual for each of the two grades. Kleinman said that if the full series were developed, NEA would agree to be co-publisher and would use its resources to disseminate it to the nation's schools. He told the publishers: "Speaking for the NEA, we are extremely interested in the program. We would be partners in every sense of the word."

Call to Writers

Southern Exposure, the journal of Southern culture and political economy, seeks previously unpublished articles, short stories, photographic essays or poetry which illuminate some aspect of the rich progressive tradition of the Southern region. Send inquiries and manuscripts to: Editors, *Southern Exposure*, P.O. Box 531, Durham, N.C. 27702.

Is He/Is She?

The following questions by Nancy J. Woodhull, managing editor of the *Rochester* (N.Y.) *Democrat and Chronicle*, are directed to editors. We think they apply to everyone. . . .

- Do you think a male is dynamic, but a female is aggressive?
- Do you view a male editor as firm, but a female as inflexible?
- Is he good on details, but she is picky?
- Is he a go-getter, but she is pushy?
- Does he lose his temper, but she is bitchy? . . .
- Does he follow through, but she doesn't know when to quit?
- Is he confident, but she is stuck up?
- Does a male editor have the courage of his convictions, but a female editor is stubborn?
- Does he have dreams, but she has delusions of grandeur? . . .
- Is he human, but she is emotional?
- Does he diligently exercise his authority, but she is power mad?
- Is he closed-mouthed, but she is secretive?
- Does he make decisions quickly, but she is impulsive?
- Is he a stern taskmaster, but she's hard to work for?
- Is he experienced, but she has been through the mill? . . .

Reprinted from *Media Report to Women*, November 1, 1981.

Correction: The byline for "The Woman's Suffrage Movement in Children's Books," which appeared in the last issue of the *Bulletin*, failed to give the full name of one of the co-authors; the piece was written by Donna Barkman and Susan C. Griffith.

Continued from page 27

practices were the result of a deliberate U.S. policy to maintain direct control over the new colony. Next the U.S. set up a discriminatory employment system that reserved the best-paying jobs for whites from the U.S., the next best for Europeans, the most menial and dangerous for Blacks. The U.S. also introduced Jim Crow laws throughout the Panama Canal Zone. While discrimination against Blacks, mestizos and Indians was well established in the region, it had been based primarily on class; the U.S. institution of rigid segregation was based strictly on color. Most of the workers stayed on after the Canal was completed, to work as canal operators and as employees on the U.S. military base established in the Canal Zone.

Colonial Blacks have long been active in organizations like trade unions, but their protests have been focused on working conditions rather than racial discrimination as such. On the other hand, West Indians have been consistently involved with race issues. This is changing, as colonial Blacks have begun to link employment with issues involving racial discrimination, and the West Indians for their part are more and more identifying themselves with national issues.

In the last 20 years, in Panama particularly, Blacks of West Indian descent have become active in politics. Moreover, the divisions fostered between the descendants of colonial Blacks and the West Indians are being somewhat eroded and replaced by the recognition of a common African heritage and national identity. The two branches of the common stem are beginning to intertwine.

Among the region's groups that have remained removed from national life, such as Black communities on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast neglected by Somoza or the Blacks in Panama who live outside the Canal Zone, the process of integration has lagged. These groups still feel alienated from their societies, and are strongly influenced by the vestige of colonialism. Their alienation represents a serious weakness in the popular unity required for social change in each country. This is why their integration is considered so crucial by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and by progressive political leaders in Panama. □

About the Author

ELMO DOIG is a Panamanian who has participated in the Congress of Blacks in the Americas. He has been active with Central America solidarity movements in the U.S.

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