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RESIST

Newsletter #185

A call to resist illegitimate authority

April 1986

"Rambo" vs. "Latino"

Cold War Culture Goes Pop!

JOHN DEMETER

The scene on Holyoke St. in Cambridge's Harvard Square Feb. 18 could easily have been mistaken for an act in an absurdist drama. An icy rain was pouring, as 150 picketers marched across from Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatrical Club. The strobe lights from television crews created an eerie special-effects glow. National and local media plied the demonstrators for interviews as a contingent of Cambridge and Harvard University police kept watch, screening people arriving for the Pudding Club's annual "Man of the Year" award presentation. Two stories above the street in neighboring Dudley House, a university dorm, student pranksters blared the theme "Rocky" from out an open window.

The object of attention that evening spent the better part of the Vietnam era working as a security guard at an exclusive school for girls in Switzerland but now has risen to American pop icon, darling of President and (moving-going) populace alike. Sylvester Stallone, who—with his onscreen personas of Rocky Balboa and John Rambo—has produced two of the three top grossing movies this year, was being honored "for creating yet another endearing and unforgettable characterization." The only conclusion that could be drawn from the club's press release



Photo by Bill Short, Somerville Community News

was that the award sponsors were citing Stallone, creator of "Rocky Balboa," for his latest work of art: "John Rambo," the alienated, anti-social Vietnam vet who vented his frustration in a cinematic rampage against military and civilian police in "First Blood."

In this past summer's "Rambo: First Blood Part II," the sullen, monosyllabic "hero" is recruited by the U.S. military to return to Vietnam to rescue American POWs allegedly still being held—and tortured—by the Vietnamese. Needless to say, he ac-

complishes his goal but not before laying waste to scores of "yellow peril" and a Ruskie who conveniently happens to be directing the prison compound. Stallone's "win this time" retelling of the Vietnam War, coupled with his victory over the Russian boxing champion in this winter's "Rocky IV" have provided the biggest one-two punch for the burgeoning American "warnography" industry. It has become an obsession that permeates television and movies alike, seeping into spin-off artifacts and children's toys

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Letters

Women in Peace Movement

Dear Friends,

I strongly RESIST Karen Kahn's assessment of the reasons for the poor health of the peace movement. I would have liked to attempt a point-by-point rebuttal but, having read conscientiously through the article several times, I find I still have not been able to grasp her major points. Since I am an intelligent and thoughtful reader, well-versed in the issues, I think it is fair to conclude that the fault lies in poor presentation of the subject rather than some inability on my part.

I appeal to the editors of RESIST to avoid publishing so-called "scholarly" papers which are so obscure that they cannot be understood after two or three readings by a moderately intelligent person.

However I do gather that the author is blaming women for the debacle of the Peace Movement. And the author is a woman! Will things never change? We are being faulted for taking the high moral ground on peace issues. Unfortunately this is not something we can choose to do or not to do—the issue is a profoundly moral one. To plan the destruction of humankind is immoral, those who oppose the policies which take us in that direction are driven by innate moral instincts. The fact that more women than men hold that position is not because women have higher moral sensibilities but because women are not in the decision-making levels of our society. It is much easier to take a high moral position when you will not be challenged to translate it into action. To say that one of the reasons the Peace Movement is in trouble is that women chose to make it a moral issue is just one more example of blaming women whenever things go wrong and I strenuously object!

No, the real task for women today, in the Peace Movement and elsewhere, is to take control of our own lives. The men who run our world will not give up that power voluntarily. We must, individually and collectively, assert our right to govern our own lives and proceed to act in whatever ways are needed

to achieve our freedom. We can only be "marginalized" when we allow that to happen. We need to act with courage, a virtue we have allowed men to monopolize, but we need it now to join together to oppose the forces of destruction in the world.

Why should we care whether they call us "Great Mother" or "Degraded Whore"? It does not change what we have to do—Take back the world from the destroyers!

Yours in Peace and Joy!
Margaret Arteaga

Kahn Responds

Dear Ms. Arteaga:

I am sorry you so completely misunderstood my article "Gender Ideology and the Disarmament Movement," published in the December issue of *Resist*. In reality, I don't think we disagree as much as you suggest. I agree entirely with your statement that "we can only be 'marginalized' when we allow that to happen." In fact, that is exactly my argument, we are allowing just that to happen within the peace movement.

I don't blame women for the "debacle of the peace movement." An analysis that blames the victim fails to recognize the forces of oppression which define the lives of the powerless. I fully acknowledge and support the struggle of women against male domination, whether inside the peace movement or without. My point is that we must reflect upon that struggle and ask ourselves if we are choosing an appropriate (winning) strategy; otherwise we become vulnerable to manipulation by the very forces we are struggling against. As feminists we have spent the last 15 years challenging cultural definitions of "womanhood" which reduced our existence to "motherhood." Why then do we allow the peace movement to define our participation in these very terms?

Cultural ideologies, including that which suggests that women, because they are or can be mothers, are naturally more peace loving than men, are manipulative. If we allow our resistance to be defined by this ideology, we

allow much of what motivates us—the social, political and economic relations which define the position of women in our society—to remain invisible. I am not arguing that women should not take the moral high ground in the struggle for peace. I am arguing that we should not allow "motherhood" alone to define the moral high ground. Is it not equally moral to resist the oppression of women by a militaristic society as women?

We must clarify the connections between women's continued oppression and the social and economic trends which mark a technologically driven, militarized society: increased violence against women, increased economic marginalization, and loss of status and power in the political arena. In addressing these issues we move beyond ideology and begin to construct a political analysis through which we can build broad based opposition to militarism and war.

In peace,
Karen Kahn



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Will the Palestinians Survive the Peace Process?

ROBERT VITALIS

Note: Most of the information contained in this article is culled from material published in the mainstream Israeli press and translated in such publications as ISRA/Counter-Source (formerly israleft), the dispatches of Israel Shahak, and the English language edition of Aj-Fajr. For the historical background and more detailed discussion of the issues raised here, see Noam Chomsky's invaluable study, The Fateful Triangle, Boston: South End Press, 1983. This is part two of a two-part article.

The Iron Fist of Peace

Israelis and Palestinians have in recent months found themselves confronting an ominous and alarming escalation in the level of violent activities in the territories. Israeli soldiers and civilians have been victims of a number of attacks leaving 15 dead by the end of 1985. In many cases the criminals have not been caught. Similarly the toll of Palestinians killed and wounded by the army and civilians has mounted. Israeli mobs, often from the settlements, have beaten Arab pedestrians, attacked shopowners and vandalized mosques and private homes. Bombs left at bus stations and markets, stonings, shootings at buses and other random acts of terror have escalated the tension.

Israeli politicians play on people's fears in furthering their particular ends. Kahane and the Tehiya party laud the vigilantism and provocations of the settlers. The Likud has called for bombing Jordan, which it claims permits terrorists sanctuary. Labor links the violence to the PLO. The negotiated release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli jails last May in a controversial exchange for three Israelis captured in Lebanon further enraged many Israelis. Likud officials responded by leading the public demand for amnesty for the Jewish Terror Underground, imprisoned for murderous attacks in the West Bank.

Israeli experts like Yehoshua



Shattee camp, Gaza

Harkabi note repeatedly that the Palestinian violence is not well organized nor does it receive outside direction, but rather "is primarily a matter of local initiative." (Interview in *Ha'aretz*, 29 September 1985). The increase in random attacks of violence by Palestinians is rooted in the continuation of the occupation, according to Zeev Schiff, Israel's respected military correspondent. "One must remember that we are engaged in a war with a people which has been pushed into a corner . . . We shouldn't be surprised that the Palestinians take up arms or resort to various forms of sabotage. Any people in this situation would do the same, including the Jews." (*Ha'aretz*, 28 July 1985)

These more sober and much more frightening assessments of the situation appear not to have influenced the government's political calculations. Peres instead sought to appear tougher than Likud in the face of an angry Israeli electorate, a stance which he hoped would permit him to continue his initiative with Jordan. Thus an Israeli cabinet meeting on 4 August sanctioned increased repressive measures against the 1.5 million Palestinians living occupation.

The resort to the iron fist yielded immediate and impressive results—of a

sort. The Israelis began to fill the jails with Palestinians who were detained without charges. Deportations were resumed. The military closed the largest West Bank university, Al-Najan, for two months in August and shut down the newspaper *al-Darb* and the *al-Hanar* press office. Soldiers broke up a protest held in Ramallah on 31 August by a new Israeli group, Jews Against Occupation, by firing rubber bullets. Three Israelis were beaten.

By September the government has moved in regular Israeli combat forces (released from duty in Lebanon earlier in the Spring) to augment the reservists who usually guard the territories. As reported in the *Manchester Guardian* (6 October 1985), random harassment of Arabs by Israeli army patrols is commonplace. Under the pretext of checking identity cards the soldiers force their victims to perform a degrading act before being permitted to depart. Some are forced to dance, others are made to bark like dogs, down on their knees; an Arab in Hebron was ordered to kiss the ass of his donkey.

The settler groups, which include armed militias, make frequent and direct shows of the force they have acquired. Israeli journalists who tried to

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Photo by Joan Mandell

Palestinians

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film settlers vandalizing homes and a mosque in Halhul (the settlers were "avenging" the shooting of a bus that runs from the settlement of Kiryat Arba to Jerusalem) were set upon and had their equipment destroyed as soldiers watched. The journalists describe the situation as one in which the army is divided between those willing to carry out their duty and those who actively protect the settlers, backed as well by members of Parliament and military officials. Zeev Schiff agrees that any estimate of the military potential of the settlers must include their numerous army sympathizers (*Ha'aretz*, 15 November 1985).

Beatings, searches, and curfews provide the public with tangible evidence of the government's resolve. As of January 1986, more than 100 Palestinians have been jailed without charges, under Administrative Detention (according to Amnesty International this practice is a violation of Articles 9 and 10 of the universal declaration of Human Rights.). Twenty five Palestinians have been deported. The last collective punishment of 1985 was carried out on 30 December when Israeli soldiers bulldozed nine shelters housing 3 families in al-Fawwar Refugee camp near Hebron. Each of the families had members in prison, *still awaiting trial* for the charge of belonging to the PLO.

Regardless of the public perception, these practices will not halt the violence. Peres surely understands this. The iron fist serves an entirely different purpose. Recalling the repressive policies of 1981-82, the real targets of this latest offensive are the leaders of the Palestinian community and its institutions. Those rounded up under the Emergency Laws include the leaders of the student councils of Bir Zeit and Bethlehem Universities, and Hebron Polytechnic; youth movement activists and voluntary services groups; union leaders and activists including 12 members of the executive council of one of the main trade unions, the Workers Unity Bloc; teachers; journalists; and community leaders like Azmi Shuaibi, a member of the al-Bireh town council which was earlier dismissed by the occupation authority. As Palestinian lawyers argue, the Israelis report to Administration Detention if they have no evidence to charge Palestinians with membership in hostile organizations.



Photo by Joan Mandell

Folk festival, West Bank

Two other actions further illustrate the intent of the iron fist. When the nationalist leadership called a meeting to discuss the deportations, the authorities banned the gathering. And very recently, the work of the Palestinian human rights group, Law in the Service of Man, has been targetted. The group's field workers are among the most recent detainees under the emergency laws. The dogged persistence of the Palestinians in fighting to maintain their institutions—schools, newspapers, women's groups, cultural centers, legal clinics—against state repression needs to be kept in mind when reading the advice of Israeli "friends" like Meron Benvenisti who plead with the Palestinians to finally "decide to work within the system." (*Nation*, 18 January 1986).

Simultaneous with the actions meant to repress nationalist organizers and activists, Peres is trying to produce the kind of leadership he needs for the peace process. The Israelis helped create the leadership vacuum in 1982 when they forced the resignation of mayors elected in 1976—in elections supervised by the Israelis and judged with much fanfare as free and fair—who, not surprisingly, represented the nationalist aspirations of their constituencies. The Labor party's dedication to improving the "quality of life" for the Palestinians now includes creation of an environment that "Arabs" find most natural. Thus when Defense Minister Rabin is asked about elections, he points to other Arab states and begs, "forgive me not to be the pioneer

of freedom and democracy for the Arabs in what the world considers to be the occupied territories." ("Palestinians in Occupied Lands: a Leadership Void" *Los Angeles Times*, 23 October 1985) This is the same argument used by those who defend the South African regime by pointing to human rights abuses in, say, Kenya.

Peres, in concert with Jordan, is trying to cultivate an "authentic" and "moderate" leadership, though some of the hand-picked new men were even too suspect for Hussein to approve. Thus the engineer and businessman Uthman Hallak, an outspoken defender of the Peres project and so a familiar source for American reporters anxious to explore the leadership void, failed in his attempt to organize a negotiating group. More recently, however, Jordan has approved Peres's plan to appoint new mayors to some of the West Bank towns. The Israelis soon unveiled the new mayor of Nablus—Thafur al-Masri, a wealthy businessman, head of the Nablus Chamber of Commerce, with strong links to the Jordanian regime. Bassam Shak'a, the elected Mayor of Nablus and the symbolic head of the local nationalist leadership, immediately condemned the action.

The Occupation: Toward An Apartheid State, Toward a Civil War

"Everybody is talking about peace, but I don't see any peace. I just see more soldiers." —A Palestinian in Hebron

The peace process is one battle in the

longer war to break the Palestinian national movement, exile its leaders, rob the Palestinians of their national identity, their wealth and their land. The resistance as well as the violence in the territories continues. On January 1 1986 Palestinians demonstrated in the Gaza strip to mark the anniversary of the founding of Fatah.

The current political rivalry between Labor and Likud has ultimately little to do with the future of the territories. Autonomy is the essence of both parties' schemes. As Danny Rubinstein notes, this is a non-option since in practice, Palestinians and Jordanians have had responsibility from the beginning of the occupation for those internal affairs which do not affect Israeli "interests." These interests are a key to the continuation of the occupation, the perpetuation of Israeli control over the people and the territory, in what Israeli journalist Gadi Vatziv called a system of Bantustans and what Orit Shohat likened to Apartheid (*Ha'artz* 27 September 1985).

The territories are a gold mine for the Israelis: a captured market; a crucial supplier of labor for jobs which Israelis cannot or will not perform; a source of raw materials—land and water. 52% of the entire West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) and 40% of the Gaza Strip has been appropriated by the State, which by law means that land is only for Jews. Israeli newspapers continue to reveal details of fraud and corruption by Likud officials who have grown rich through land deals on the West Bank. (*Ha'aretz*, 4 December 1985) Some of the same Likud officials implicated in the exploitation of the West Bank also appear as businessmen involved in scandals in the South African "homeland" of Ciskei where—as in other bantustans—Israelis have been carrying out military and commercial dealings. ("Israel and the Bantustans," *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, December 1985)

In *The West Bank Data Base Project: A Survey of Israel's Policies*, a study published in 1984 by the American Enterprise Institute, Meron Benvenisti examined the results of Israel's exploitation of the West Bank: "communal stagnation" caused by discriminatory terms of trade, lack of credit, destruction of the economic infrastructure, the lack of subsidies and the crippling administrative restric-

tions imposed any time Palestinians attempt to establish factories or other "competitive" enterprises. With the Palestinians reduced to wage workers in Israeli factories, fields, restaurants and construction sites, and with no outlet for savings other than the purchase of Israeli goods, the occupation regime can deceptively quote "statistics on the increase in GNP and the consumption of durables," and thus "depict the occupation as benign and beneficial."

The new-found "prosperity" of the Palestinians, born of the privilege to work in Israel, to serve as middlemen in land deals, to transport the "slave

labor" (as described at times in the Israeli press) to and from the territories to work within Israel each day (Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza are forbidden by law to remain in Israel overnight), provides the data with which to defend the racist and exploitative character of that occupation and to obscure the underlying material interests which make its continuation the most likely Israeli policy.

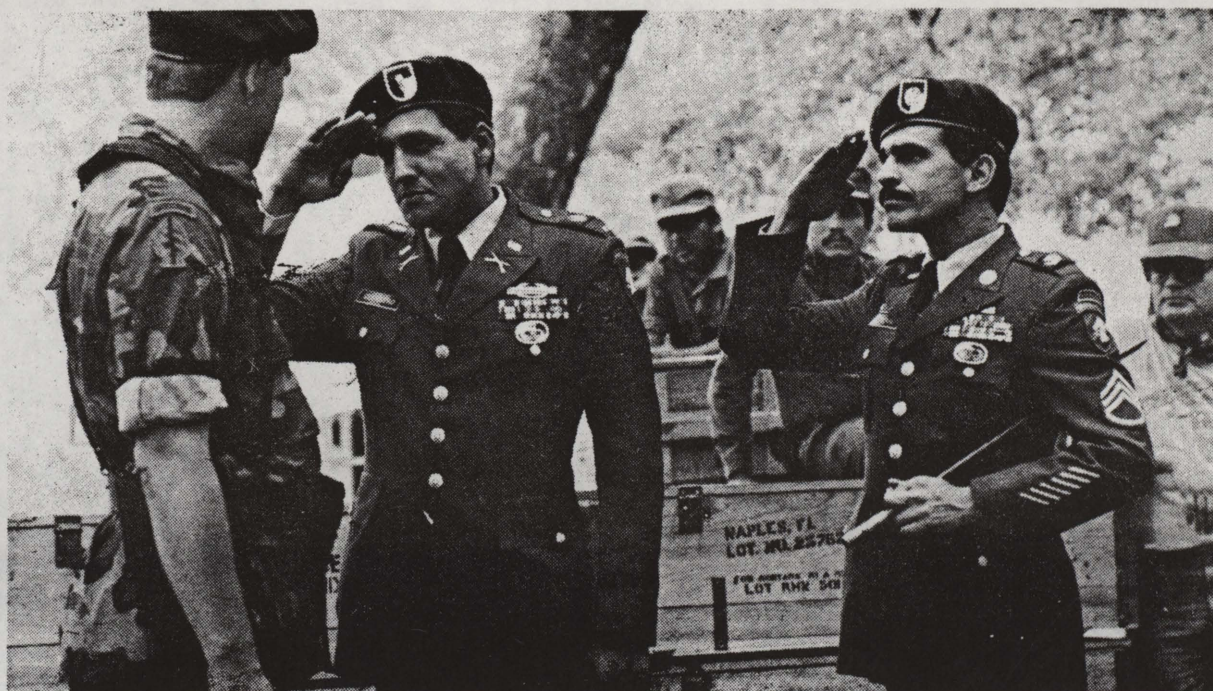
Moshe Ma'oz, a leading Israeli "Arabist" (in Israeli the Arabists are generally servants of the State's security and intelligence apparatus) who

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Photo by Joan Mandell

Palestinian women in Gaza sit-in at Red Cross office to protest prison conditions.



Scene from "Latino"

—from Rambo 'Black Flak' chewing gum, to Rambo dolls and even 'Chamo-patch' outerwear (should your Cabbage Patch 'child' need to suit up in the event of an alien invasion).

Those of us parading outside the Harvard theater club that evening sought to challenge Stallone's very conscious brand of cold war hysteria, and contrast the award's glorification of his work with the very real, personal and psychic toll it has taken. For the members of Boston-area Asian community and student groups who marched that night, the fight was against "Rambo's" message that "Asian life is cheap," at a time when gang and street violence against members of their community has reached dramatic proportions. "The same week 'Rambo' opened in Boston, a Vietnamese family's house in East Boston was broken into, and members of the family were harassed and attacked," added Peter Kiang, program director of the Asian American Resource Workshop and a graduate student at Harvard. Nearly every neighborhood in the Boston area has had similar incidents of anti-Asian violence in the past year.

The more than a dozen Vietnam veterans in the protest carried "Rambo vs. Reality" signs, challenging Stallone's misrepresentation of the Vietnam War and blatant attempt to "psychologically prepare people for

future military intervention." Winston Warfield, a veteran and member of the anti-war Major General Smedley B. Butler Brigade added, "He [Stallone] is misrepresenting an experience that tore our lives up. We're here to say there's no glory in war." Others in the group criticized the film for exploiting for profit the emotional issue of MIAs.

As Stallone's film demographics indicate, his primary audience is boys and young men—the very population that will be tapped for such "adventures," albeit without the mega-star's special effects. Thus, for many others in the crowd, the presentation to youth of a role model who lives by violence, dominating others with his fists or with a gun, fits not only Ronald Reagan's view of the world but a distorted and dangerous projection of masculinity as well. But what gives many of these oft repeated criticisms of Hollywood their special urgency today?

Two decades ago, surging social movements challenged the central conceit of most mass entertainment. Upperclass, white, heterosexual men provided the majority of subjects in contemporary films and tv fare, while women, working class people, blacks, and gays, most often filled stereotyped characterizations. Today, the legacy of some of those challenges remain, as evidenced in a handful of progressive television shows and a few films. But,

as with the reforms of that era, most of those changes are under attack. What is more, slick PR abilities are now personified in the public face of the Right as it settles further in the seat of national power. That the slickest of them all is a former B-movie actor who has induced a media stupor that helps to cover the most glaring of personal gaffes and policy miscues, is but one side of the social and political crisis we face today. For beyond Reagan, beyond the New Right, there is a population for whom the president's "Dr. Feelgood" pronouncements and the "America's great again!" ad campaigns are meeting some real or perceived needs.

Recently, a British writer described popular culture as having the ability to encapsulate prejudices and express the myths with which society consoles itself.¹ Radical critics seem to have shown little ability to understand the potency of such culture. Often, we find ourselves closing our eyes, trying to wish it away. But, the current rage of the "warnography" industry (the British term the obsession "wargasm") has antecedents similar to the social movement critiques of the 1960s. It is a protest movement as well. Whether, as some have argued, it may hold the seeds of fascism, I do not know. But it must be taken seriously, talked about, and whenever and wherever possible, confronted. The Hollywood liberals

may want to hide their collective heads in the sand, grant "Oscars" to "Ghandi" and "Amadeus" while "Rambo" and "Red Dawn" are the top money-making films, but we should not follow suit.

Of course, the upsurge in films and tv movies feeding this Cold War hysteria and fanatical obsession with a government-defined "terrorist" threat comes with the approval of the very policymakers whose fantasies are played out by the likes of Sylvester Stallone. But, these dramas play to large, receptive audiences at a period when the liberal opposition continues to retreat in the face of Moral Majority campaigns or recent efforts to censor rock lyrics and other art forms. What appeared at one time to be media and entertainment industries that could offer some degree of "objectivity" and "progressive" cultural expression have been transformed to cowering self-censors by lawsuits and rightwing campaigns. Then again, upon closer view, they appear as merely an expression of their multi-national, conglomerate selves; fearful of losses, and sensitive first to the bottomline of their respective corporate parts.

No clearer expression of that primacy of corporate identification and control of ideas could appear than the scene a scant four city blocks from our "greeting" for Stallone. At Cambridge's Orson Welles Cinema that night, a "war movie" of a different type was playing out the end of a short and commercially-mixed two week run. Haskell Wexler's "Latino," a dramatic feature film centering on the US-subsidized "contra" war against Nicaragua, which has opened in but a handful of cities across the country, presents a case-book example of the ideological control exerted on dissident media.

Wexler himself is a hybrid of commercial and political traditions. An Academy-award winning cinematographer for films such as "Bound for Glory," and "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?," he produced the political cult film "Medium Cool" (about the 1968 Democratic Convention), worked with Emile de Antonio on "Underground" (about the Weather Underground group, and for which he earned a Grand Jury subpoena), and is also known for his controversial 1970 documentary, "In-

troduction to the Enemy," which was shot in North Vietnam. For "Latino," Wexler travelled to Nicaragua with veteran political documentary filmmakers Tom Sigel and Deborah Shaffer, to film the story of a Chicano Green Beret sent on a clandestine mission to train contras on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border.

Mixing surrealistic battle scenes, documentary footage, and the story of the Chicano's developing relationship with a Nicaraguan woman living near the secret camp, Wexler provides a powerful and often moving personal glimpse beyond the terse media coverage of the US' not-so-covert war. While the political sympathies of the film are far from hidden, the form and content of this docudrama can give it entrance to a much wider audience. The mix of Hollywood and politics, though, does not make for a complete and easy merger. Wexler's commercial-style cuts from the soldier's affair with the exile, to his training of the contras; and from the Nicaraguan farm cooperative, to the surrounding countryside and the experience of the victims of the contra attacks, serve to build a thematic tension, but also unfortunately move to too predictable a resolution.

The relationship between the Vietnam veteran turned covert military adviser and his Nicaraguan lover allows Wexler to explore the internal tensions and contradictions of the use of Latinos as "expendable" point men. When he contrasts the experiences of the soldier, Eddie Guerrero, at

"home" in Los Angeles and with the sights and people of Central America as well as having him compare his tour in Southeast Asia with his "off the record" excursion among people speaking his language and sharing many of the same customs, Wexler tackles complex and intimate transformations believably. Such parallels and "lessons," move from the screen with a subjective power that even the best of documentaries often cannot provide.

Ironically, it is when Wexler's cinema verita style is picturing work at the cooperative, training at the military camp, a contra attack on the village, or the moving funeral for a contra victim in Nicaragua that it functions best. It is a film, however, that rises above the weakness of some of its parts to provide us with a dramatic and engaging story, though one that may rarely be seen beyond some urban centers. As Wexler has stated, the system may not have been able to lock the door completely, but it does preclude most filmmakers from making strong political statements in their work.²

For Wexler, that reality was confronted directly after the film was made. While he was able to raise the nearly \$5 million budget for "Latino," the veteran cinematographer found himself without any distribution outlets. Before finally receiving post production assistance from his friend and fellow filmmaker George Lucas, Wexler had taken the film around to the major distribution companies and was uniformly rejected by all of them. As he told one reporter, "They said it was a good film, even an interesting, commercially viable film. They really had nothing serious to say against it." But, he added, their rejections came down to "Our corporate position wouldn't allow us to handle this type of film." Or, "I'm not sure what the stockholders would think and I can't risk it." Wexler continued, "These are comments from people [from companies] like Gulf & Western and Coca-Cola who own studios like Paramount and Columbia. The film divisions of these multinational conglomerates represent a pimple on their corporate butt. [But] . . . They're going to protect it beyond belief."³

Eventually a deal was finalized with New York-based Cinecom, the company that originally distributed the independent film "El Norte." The

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advocates the policy of nurturing a collaborationist leadership, writes of "the generally mild and human military rule of Israel in the West Bank, combined with her progressive economic and social policies. . ." (*Palestinian Leadership on the West Bank: The Changing Role of the Mayors Under Jordan and Israel*, London 1984). This is the claim advanced by the intellectual handmaidens of every colonialist occupation: the US in the Philippines, Great Britain in Egypt, the Apartheid regime in South Africa and Israel in Palestine.

Zeev Schiff sees this human rule and progressive economic policy as "pushing the Arabs further and further into a corner." (*Ha'aretz*, 5 September 1985). His view of the outcome of the peace process is put quite starkly: "a general civil uprising by the Arab population . . . the first stage in a civil war which could place Israel in confrontation with American and Western public opinion, similar to what's happening today vis-a-vis South Africa." (*Ha'aretz*, 27 September.)

This is the more pessimistic forecast and assumes a dramatic loss of US support for Israel. Given Israel's continuing value to the US as a strategic asset, the peace process may well yield larger dividends: expulsion of the Palestinians, another Mideast war with Jordan or Syria, a global holocaust.

Robert Vitalis is a graduate student at M.I.T. and an activist who recently spent several months in the Middle East.



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company agreed to take "Latino," however, only after the filmmaker agreed to raise the distribution money. How widely the film circulates may depend on grassroots pressure by groups and individuals on local theaters. The dramatic nature of the film and its stylized "realism" may make that task somewhat easier, but it is again just another symptom of the upward climb for an alternative vision in today's climate of re-born jingoism and soft-focus chauvinism.

The world in Sylvester Stallone's eyes is not as complicated as that of Wexler or the protagonist of "Latino." As Stallone told one interviewer, "I stand for ordinary Americans, losers a lot of them. They don't understand big, international politics. Their country tells them to fight in Vietnam? They fight." If he has his way, John Rambo, his noble savage of the new patriotism, "will probably next go somewhere in the news, maybe Central America." Perhaps we can hope that "Latino's" Eddie Guerrero may get a chance to talk to him there, you know, man to man.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hilary Kingsley, *New Statesman* (England), Feb. 7, 1986.

2. Interview with Kevin Kelley, *Guardian*, Nov. 13, 1985.

3. Interview with Gregg Barrios, *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 22, 1985.

4. "Fascist Guns in the West?" J. Hoberman, *American Film*, March 1986.

5. *Boston Herald*, Feb. 19, 1986.

John Demeter is an editor of Radical America. This summer he will be hosting a four day workshop at the World Fellowship Center (Conway, NH) on "AMERICA/ANOTHER VIEW: A history of documentary film since 1960" featuring filmmakers Emile de Antonio, Margaret Lazarus, and Renner Wunderlich.