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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

April, 1994

Peace Talks in Palestine Stumble and Fall

MICHAL SCHWARTZ

Michal Schwartz was born in Jerusalem in 1949, a second generation Israeli, into a liberal Zionist home. The war in 1967 began her process of political radicalization. While attending Hebrew University in 1968, she became involved in political organizing in opposition to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1977 she helped found Hanitzotz A-Sharara (The Spark), an organization of Jews and Arabs promoting a non-Zionist perspective of equality between the two peoples in Israel, and a just solution to the Palestinian question. She also married, had two daughters, and became involved in the Israeli feminist movement.

In 1982, in the wake of the Lebanon War, Hanitzotz A-Sharara became immersed in the anti-war movement. Since the Israeli media was devoid of information about the Occupied Territories, the group founded a bilingual newspaper (Hebrew and Arabic) to bring information to the Israeli public and promote a two-state solution. When the Intifada erupted in December, 1987, the paper became a



"Normal" life in Jabalya Refugee Camp, Gaza Strip. Photo: Alison Bradley/IMPACT VISUALS

vital source of information for the Israeli and foreign media.

In January of 1988, the Israeli Ministry of Interior threatened to shut the paper down, and Schwartz helped form the Forum for Action on Freedom of the Press. The paper was banned in February, 1988, and in April Schwartz and four other staff members were arrested and charged with being mem-

bers of the PLO. They were convicted, in what they believe was a highly politicized trial, because of their close association with Palestinians opposed to the policies of occupation.

Schwartz was sentenced to 18 months in prison, which she spent in Neve Tirza women's prison. She and her colleagues were adopted by Amnesty
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International and P.E.N. She was released in October, 1989, and resumed her political and journalistic work. She was one of the founders of Challenge, a bi-monthly magazine of the Israeli Left. The editorial staff of this magazine, which is produced by volunteers, consists almost entirely of women. Schwartz continues to be active in Hanitzotz A-Sharara. She is also involved with the weekly anti-occupation vigils of Women in Black, and is a member of Women for Women Political Prisoners in Jerusalem.

Schwartz was invited to speak at

the annual conference of the Middle East Justice Network in Wichita, Kansas, last November, and also toured New York and Boston. The following is an edited and slightly updated version of her talk, with a brief postscript concerning the recent murder of Palestinians in Hebron by a Jewish settler.

As the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians stumble forward, Israel is unilaterally and surreptitiously designing and pursuing plans for continuing its occupation, as if the negotiations with the Palestinians had never begun. For example, a secret Ministry of

Housing plan, revealed by Israeli news media in January, involves the construction of 650 kilometers of new roads in the West Bank, at a cost of 700 million dollars. These roads will facilitate access to the Israeli settlements by connecting them to each other, bypassing Palestinian villages and towns. The entire length of the West Bank is 120 kilometers, and at its widest it is 70 kilometers. So a project of this magnitude involves large scale land confiscation, with all the new roads under Israeli sovereignty. This leaves little room, even between the settlements, for any contiguous Palestinian autonomous regions. This secret road map is but one indication of Israeli intentions for the final status of the West Bank.

The historic handshake between Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin indeed opened up a new era in the Middle East. It is an era in which the New World Order is being implemented in the region, with Israel its main agent, and with the collaboration of the current

RESIST Follows Up....

It isn't often that we're able to provide RESIST readers with positive updates on issues that we've recently covered in the newsletter, but this month we're happy to bring you two such reports, and more good news...

- Our October, 1993 issue included the article "Western Shoshone Sisters Defend Treaty Rights," about the efforts of the Dann family to live on and use their treaty-protected land. Clifford Dann was injured and arrested in November, 1992, while trying to stop the Bureau of Land Management from removing horses from the land. Dann was recently released from prison, although he still faces a two-year probationary period and a \$5,000 fine. The Western Shoshone Defense Committee urges activists to write the White House and Attorney General Janet Reno to exonerate Dann and clear his record. For more information, write WSDP, General Delivery, Crescent Valley, NV 89821. Tel: (702) 468-0230.

- In our December, 1993 issue we addressed the concerns of prisoners with AIDS in the article, "Prisoners Respond to AIDS — Inside and Outside the Walls," by Judy Greenspan. The Coalition to Support Women Prisoners at Chowchilla reports that Betty Jo Ross, a prisoner with AIDS, was released on January 5th, 1994, the culmination of a two-month campaign to win her compassionate release. Ross was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS, and suffered from dementia and an AIDS related infection that causes blindness. She had been serving a two

year sentence at the prison, and was denied compassionate release in November and again in December. Over 1,000 prisoners signed a petition demanding her immediate release, and pinned signs on their clothing saying "Free Betty," and "Don't Let Betty Die in Prison." The Coalition held a protest at the prison January 29th demanding that the prison hire an HIV/AIDS medical specialist and to provide proper diets for women with AIDS. For more info: Coalition to Support Women Prisoners (510) 530-6241, or write: Prison Issues Committee, ACT UP/San Francisco, P.O. Box 14844, San Francisco, CA 94114.

- And finally, long time political prisoner Ed Mead was paroled on October 14th, 1993. Mead served 18 years for his activities with the George Jackson Brigade, a group providing armed support for various Native American, labor, and prisoner struggles in the northwest in the early 1970s. The average time spent in prison in Washington state for the type of crimes Mead was convicted of is under five years. While in prison, Mead focused on organizing prisoners to educate themselves and take responsibility for their actions. In the mid-1970s he organized Men Against Sexism to stop prisoner on prisoner rape at the Walla Walla (WA) maximum security state prison. He helped found support groups of prisoners' families and friends at several prisons, and published *The Marion Times* while at the Marion Control Unit. More recently he was co-editor of *Prison Legal News*, which received several RESIST grants.



ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

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For information and grant guidelines write to:
Resist, One Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143

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RESIST Staff: Nancy Wechsler
Nancy Moniz

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PLO leadership. Rather than facilitate actual "autonomy" for Palestinians, the Oslo agreement undermines and limits Palestinian authority in both the short term and the long term.

Under this new order, Israel is to change from exerting direct military rule over the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to indirect rule through the new local PLO police force which will be under the direction of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). In return for the guarantee of a strong police force, the PLO will safeguard Israeli security needs. Control of the police outside Gaza and Jericho will not be handed over to the PLO unless opposition and resistance to the Israeli presence in the occupied territories has been suppressed during the three-year interim period covered by the agreement. The Declaration of Principles (DOP) made no linkage between that interim period and the final period of the five-year agreement.

Settlements an Obstacle to Palestinian Autonomy

Palestinian authority is also limited functionally and geographically by the continuing presence of Jewish settlements. Israeli security forces will remain stationed around the settlements, in nearby military bases, and on strategic roads necessary to secure access to the settlements. The border passes between Egypt and Israel will also remain in the hands of the IDF, which remains the source of power during the three year interim period.

In return for limited autonomous functions in Gaza and Jericho, the rest of the West Bank remains in Israeli hands as before. If the current leadership of the PLO is able to keep law and order in Gaza, the agreement allows for it to assume more policing powers in the West Bank as well. However, the Israeli settlement pattern in the West Bank specifically excludes from autonomy the following areas:

- The greater Jerusalem metropolitan zone reaching from Ramallah in the North to Gush Etzion (halfway between Hebron and Bethlehem) in the South; and

the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement in the East whose municipal zone was recently expanded and reaches from Jerusalem all the way to Jericho. Thus the greater Jerusalem area encompasses 20% of the West Bank and divides it in the middle into two geographically separate cantons. Since March of last year the Occupied Territories have been "closed" preventing Palestinians from entering Jerusalem without permits, thus ensuring that Palestinian access to the area remains under Israeli control. Israel has given priority to establishing settlements and strategic road construction in this area.

- The Jordan valley remains in Israeli hands, except for the 54 square mile Jericho enclave. The bridges to Jordan also remain in Israeli control. Construction of a road around Jericho for Israeli settlers and the Israeli army is planned.
- In addition, the main blocks of settlements, the roads leading to them, and the military bases, all will remain in Israeli hands including the Ariel settlement block separating Nablus from Ramallah; the Hinanit Rihan settlement block and other settlements along the Green Line; and Hebron, which is likely to be given an (as yet undefined) special religious status, excluding it from the interim period. Except for Jerusalem, Hebron is the only Palestinian city where Jews have settled in its central area, and have turned part of a mosque into a synagogue. Tensions there are the most explosive.

It is important to point out that it is not the settlers themselves who are imposing obstacles to peace. On the contrary, it is Rabin who is using the settlers in order to secure continued

Israeli presence in Gaza and the West Bank as security against the peace process actually developing into Palestinian independence.

Limits to the Agreement

Nowhere in the Oslo agreement or the DOP did Israel commit itself to withdraw from the Occupied Territories in the final stage, nor to dismantle the settlements, to redive Jerusalem, or, and this is the most important point, to recognize the right of the Palestinian people to return, to Palestinian self-determination, and to statehood.

By agreeing to stop all violence and to denounce terrorism, the PLO leadership gave up the only card it had to pressure the Israeli government to withdraw. In Jericho, the leadership will, in fact, become hostages or stooges in Israeli hands, performing the same role General Lahed is performing in Southern Lebanon.

Prior to the agreement, Israel had lost control of Gaza. There was a national consensus among Israelis that they should get the hell out of Gaza. Palestinian resistance could have resulted in Israel withdrawing from the Gaza Strip without having had to give up the West Bank, Jerusalem, and to totally ignore the problem of millions of Palestinian refugees who are scattered throughout the Arab world. The Palestinian refugees form the majority of the Palestinian people. The PLO began its activities among refugees and became a revolutionary national liberation movement. Yet they were left out of the whole agreement, and overwhelmingly reject it.

The DOP, which was formulated and prepared by Israeli legal adviser Yoel Zinger, gives Palestinian recognition to Israel, while Israel does not recognize the Palestinian right to self-determination. Under this formulation, Israel only recognizes the PLO after it has agreed to give up the principles that made it the National Liberation movement it became. The PLO is asked to eliminate or amend 28 out of 33 clauses in the Palestinian National Covenant, while Israel is not asked to amend its declara-

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tion of independence, which totally ignores the existence and the rights of the Palestinian people.

By signing the accord, the PLO agreed to erase the basis of its legitimacy, the basis of its claim that Palestinians are a people with national rights, including rights to land in Palestine. It agreed to reduce the Palestinian question to that of the Autonomy rule in the Occupied Territories, legitimizing Israeli settlements and Israeli claims on the land, and leaving the refugees in Lebanon, Syria, and elsewhere, outside of the formula. The refugees are to become citizens of the respective countries where they are staying. (The Palestinians in Israel, so-called "Israeli Arabs" were left out of this formula long ago.) The PLO has also abandoned its definition of Israel as a colonialist settler movement.

It is interesting to note that by accepting Autonomy as the solution, the Labor party and the Clinton administration have accepted the Likud autonomy solution, which was raised by Begin as an alternative to the traditional U.S. and Labor party policy of "Exchange of Territories for Peace." According to the Begin plan, the Occupied Territories would be ruled by Jordan with Israeli security interests secured by Israel. Both plans excluded an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

NAFTA in the Middle East

The Camp David and Madrid agreements accepted the Likud concept of an autonomy which ensured that sovereignty of both people and land would remain in Israeli hands. Israel is now pulling Jordan into the picture, except that the responsibility which should have been given to Jordan is given to the current PLO leadership. Begin tried to use the Camp David Accords to launch a military attack on the Palestinians that would bring a military solution to the Palestinian problem (the 1982 Lebanon war). Rabin's concept is different. He is using the DOP to bring about economic colonization of the Middle East, with Tel Aviv as the metropolis and Amman, Cairo, Riad,

and Damascus as the periphery.

The main thing the PLO gave to Israel by signing the Oslo agreement is legitimization of the occupation, and normalization. Now Israel can turn the Autonomy Palestinians into a bridge to the markets of the Arab and Muslim countries. It was not for nothing that Rabin, on returning from Washington, stopped in Rabat, Morocco, and a week

Looking for ways to reach new markets, Israeli economists sought to modernize the economy and make it less reliant on Palestinian labor.

The "closure," which prevents Palestinians from entering their workplaces in Israel, brought the Palestinians to the brink of starvation. It destroyed the remains of the economy they had, and played an important part in influ-

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later hurried to China and Indonesia to sign economic agreements; that the first group Shimon Peres met with, when the accords were confirmed, were Israeli industrialists, not the military, who were kept in the dark about the Oslo agreement.

It appears that the military method of controlling the Palestinians was inefficient and outdated. This was a lesson of the Intifada and of the Gulf War, where Israeli military capacities were not needed. The collapse of the Soviet Union made Sharon's strategic anti-Soviet alliance with the U.S. unnecessary, and proved that military might based on a broken economy is not viable.

The economic boom that took place in Israel after 1967 was based on cheap Palestinian labor and the fact that the population of the Occupied Territories became consumers of Israeli products. For 25 years Israel prevented any development in the Occupied Territories, and the Palestinian economy became totally dependent on the Israeli one. Israel takes 90% of Gaza's exports, and 70% of the West Bank's. The majority of imports to the Occupied Territories are Israeli products. Today, the Palestinian Gross National Product does not exceed 1% that of Israel.

With the outbreak of the Intifada, the Palestinian workers became not only a security threat, but an unstable workforce because of frequent general strikes and curfews. Israeli products were boycotted in the Occupied Territories.

encing a certain sector of the Palestinian bourgeoisie to recognize and accept Israeli economic dominance. It also brought great support to Yitshak Rabin from Israelis of all political convictions. Have the land without the people. Retain occupation without security problems. This is the formula the new agreement will continue.

According to the DOP, the Palestinian economy is to remain tied to that of Israel. Foreign policy, tariffs, and Value Added Taxes will continue to be determined by Israel. There will be no Palestinian currency. Control over natural resources, including land, water, ports, etc., will be decided by both Palestinians and Israelis in common committees. There is almost no arena in which the Palestinians will be able to make their own decisions, with the exception of direct taxes.

Common ventures — an elephant and a fly

The magic words are "common ventures." Several large Israeli companies are now entering new engagements with Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, European, and Palestinian companies. With the latter, there will be a partnerships such as between an elephant and a fly.

According to the new division of labor, Palestine will supply the cheap labor; Israel the know-how and high technology; the World Bank, dominated by the U.S., the money. The tag, Made in Palestine (rather than Made in Israel)

will help to market the goods in Arab and Muslim countries.

Israel will develop the Palestinian infrastructure it needs to serve its interests. Strategic roads will be built across the West Bank to the Allenby bridge into Jordan, leading from Gaza orange groves to the Ashdod seaport. The planned Road 6 will connect Israel to Syria and Lebanon in the north, and Egypt in the south, also reinforcing settlements in the West Bank. A small sector of the Palestinian bourgeoisie will serve as middlemen between Israeli capital and technology and Palestinian labor. These people will prosper because they have a vested interest in keeping the Israeli economy on top.

There will be a small rise in the Palestinian standard of living because there will be more job opportunities. 100,000 Palestinian workers will continue to work in Israeli industry. The rest will work for Israeli companies in the Autonomous region. But there will be no economic development, per se. That is, development of a Palestinian national economy that serves Palestinian needs rather than Israeli needs.

The same pattern will occur with respect to Jordan, whose total GNP each year is equal to that of Israel's in one month; and in Egypt, which remains an underdeveloped country in

constant friction between the two; and a Palestinian police to oppress the growing opposition. What we have is like a combination of South Lebanon and Yugoslavia: an unsolved national problem, constant strife between ethnic groups that are intertwined, with neither one strong enough to overthrow or assimilate the other.

To get rid of a national problem is impossible. It keeps coming up, even after decades, as happened in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. Neither is the Intifada dead. As long as there are Israeli soldiers and settlers it will go on. If the PLO police force tries to suppress the Intifada and the opposition, there will be new Sabras and Shatillas, with Israel now watching on the sidelines, content to let Palestinians, rather than Israelis, kill Palestinians.

The only realistic solution to the conflict was and remains Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem; Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination; Israeli recognition of the right to return; and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967. The Palestinian opposition continues to need the support of U.S. activists in their struggle to end the occupation, and for an independent state.

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They still believe that peace, coexistence, settlers, and settlements are compatible—all that is needed is to restrict the movements of some "Goldsteins" in the settlements.
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spite of, or maybe because of, U.S. aid; and possibly in Syria and Lebanon. The latter is resistant to playing this role. It has regional ambitions of its own, as Iraq did, and consequently is unwilling to sign an agreement on Israeli terms and is in no hurry to return to the Washington talks.

South Lebanon and Yugoslavia

Shimon Peres draws an optimistic picture of the new Middle East looking like a united Western Europe. But the plan for Palestinian Autonomy looks more like South African Bantustans, dotted with Israeli settlements, with

Postscript: Hebron

The Hebron massacre brought the conflict between the Palestinians and Israeli settlers to a climax. The settlements have been at the heart of Israeli occupation policy. In 1968, a year after occupation, a Labor government had already sanctioned the first settlement deep in the West Bank—Kiryat Arba. During the following 26 years, Israeli governments have consistently used the settlements to control Palestinian land and to deny the Palestinian people national sovereignty.

Successive Israeli governments have built settlements on top of every Pales-

tinian village and city, rendering the lives of the Palestinians unbearable. Every Israeli government has armed the settlers, incorporated them into special regional military units, put the Israeli army at their service, turned a blind eye to their vandalism, and given generous amnesties to Jews who killed Palestinians.

Israeli attempts to portray mass-murderer Baruch Goldstein as a lone deranged person whose actions are unrelated to Israeli policy are patently absurd. He was never punished, despite an October, 1993 complaint against him filed by the Muslim authorities. As a settler in Kiryat Arba, Goldstein was a representative of Israeli occupation policy.

The bloodbath in Hebron is the latest in a long line of massacres perpetrated against the Palestinian people over the past 46 years. From the massacres of Dir Yassin (1948), Kufr Qassem (1956), Black September (1970), Tel a-Za'atar (1976), Sabra and Shatilla (1982), Al-Aqsa (1990), to Hebron, the massacres epitomize the reality that the Palestinian people have never enjoyed a moment of security.

The most obvious lesson of this terrible history is that only self-determination and an independent state can safeguard Palestinian security and guarantee peace for all sides in the conflict. Unfortunately, this lesson was ignored in the opening of the Madrid talks almost two years ago; it was ignored in the DOP signed in Oslo last August; and perhaps more fatally than ever before, it is being ignored by the Rabin government after the Hebron massacre.

The Rabin and Clinton administrations are calling on the negotiators to redouble their efforts to implement the DOP. They still believe that peace, coexistence, settlers, and settlements are compatible—all that is needed is to restrict the movements of some "Goldsteins" in the settlements.

Those concerned with real peace in the Middle East cannot continue in the DOP framework. The road to peace does not go through Oslo. A just peace necessitates a new agreement based on two principles: a clear linkage between

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Rebellion in Chiapas—

Zapatistas Speak for Many

JORGE CASAS

The following article is an edited version of an interview with Jorge Casas, conducted by RESIST Editor Tatiana Schreiber in mid-February, 1994. Casas grew up in Mexico City, and moved to the United States in 1977. He currently works at Red Sun Press in Boston, and is an activist in solidarity with the people of Mexico. In an earlier interview (RESIST, Vol. 2, #2, February, 1993) Casas talked about his fears for what would become of Mexico if NAFTA were to be ratified. A year later, many of those fears are being realized. The level of despair experienced by the majority of Mexicans, who are almost entirely disenfranchised, is behind the Zapatista rebellion, which broke out in Chiapas just as Casas was returning to the U.S. from a two-week visit.

I was in Mexico over Christmas. The “modernization” or opening of the economy had already had a huge impact at the time of my previous visit, but it was even more dramatic this time. There were many more foreign businesses and products flooding Mexico. I went to a mall in Mexico City—my mother wanted to show it to me—I wanted to go to a nice, fancy Mexican restaurant to take her out, but she said, “I want to take you to this place, it’s really great!” so she took me to this mall; it looked like the Atrium at Chestnut Hill, or like Copley Place [two extremely lavish malls in the Boston area], with a lot of shops I would never have imagined seeing in Mexico, like The Gap, and other North American companies. The eating area was really fancy, and most of the restaurants were from this country, like Arby’s, pizza places, Haagen Däs Ice Cream, and all the signs were in English. I walked in there, and it was like I had never left the U.S. The



Demonstrators in Mexico City march in favor of peaceful solution to the conflict in Chiapas in January. Their banner reads “Mexico is Chiapas, Zapata Lives.” Photo: Francisco Olvera, *La Jornada*.

people were all upper middle class, and you could have been anywhere. So that was a real shock, to see how this [loss of any kind of cultural distinction] has really started to happen.

There are also a lot of huge warehouses, like TJX, where you can buy everything—they are moving down there. Of course this is most obvious in Mexico City, where I was. It was amazing to me. The prices are similar to this country, it’s very expensive. There has also been a price adjustment to the peso, so everything has a totally different meaning. Middle class people, like my family, now make about 2-3 thousand pesos a month. Before the *nuevos pesos*, this was 2-3 million pesos a month. It’s very hard to get by with that kind of money. My brother, who is a newspaper reporter, makes about 2,000 pesos a month, and it’s hard. As an example, that day we went to the restaurant in the mall, we spent about \$60 for a meal for three adults and two children. That’s about 180 pesos.

Still, it’s going to be very hard for Mexican products to compete with the

influx of U.S. goods, because of the fever that Mexicans have to get imported products. In the past it was very difficult to obtain these things, you had to leave the country. Now you can go to any store to get them, and that fever is there. And some of the new products are cheaper than Mexican things—especially basic goods, like hair care products. My mother uses an American brand hairspray, for example, because it’s cheaper than the “no name” supermarket brand. People can get any kind of electronic equipment they want, and a lot of people who don’t have the cash are buying on credit.

So I think the middle class is shrinking rapidly. And, of course, rich people in Mexico are really really rich. In Cuernavaca, for example, the rich live at a level that is even more luxurious than in the U.S. They’ll have a cook, a maid, a nanny, a chauffeur, and it doesn’t really cost them very much. And incredible houses. At the same time, the middle class is being squeezed out, and, as is clear from what has happened in Chiapas, the poor are getting

even poorer.

Chiapas is a state that has been left behind for many years. When you go there, it's like traveling back in time. People say that in Chiapas the land is owned by just a few families. The land reform following the 1910 revolution never took hold. There are big haciendas there, and the owners have impunity to just go and take land from peasants, from the indigenous people, without anything happening to them. They just take possession. Much of the land was rainforest, which has been cut down to make room for these huge landowners to raise cattle. The natural resources of the area have been depleted so these few families can become even richer.

It's also a very racist area. Landowners treat the indigenous people as animals. They hire them for nothing, they take their land, they don't really think of them as people. From the economic point of view, the poor have no support from the government. The economic crisis that the country has suffered for the last ten years has had its harshest impact on these people. Yet their traditions come from pre-Colombian days. They think about land not as something you can buy and sell, but as something that is there for everybody to use. For centuries their tradition has been to own and work land communally. So when they are pushed off of their land, and they see the ecological devastation that has occurred, they feel deeply violated, both economically and culturally.

What they say is, "we have nothing else to lose but our lives, it doesn't matter what happens to us, this is about the land." Recently the government has responded to the situation by dumping some money there, but this is a band-aid solution to problems that have been going on for five hundred years or more. They just want to *tapar el sol con un dedo*, cover the sun with one finger. There has been no real support for the concerns of the poor, while the landowners have been supported to do whatever they please.

The repression that the peasants live under is extreme. The landowners have their private armies, death squads really, that, again, act with impunity. So, peo-

ple feel, if they don't fight, they are going to be killed anyway by these private armies, or by the *policia judicial*, or they are going to be caught in the middle of a drug-trafficking scheme; the big drug dealers are never caught, and usually these poor people are scapegoated and caught in the middle.

What is bizarre is that all these soldiers are the same people. The people in the Mexican army, the people who are hired as private armies for the landowners, and the armed Zapatistas...they are all from the same background and are fighting against each other. As Carlos Fuentes noted in a recent column in the *Boston Globe*, the peasants in Chiapas are indigenous people and the indigenous people are peasants. There is no real distinction.

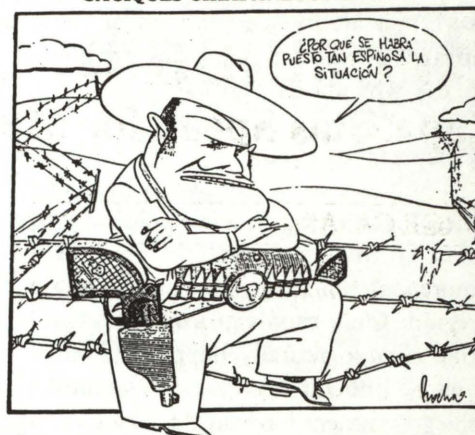
NAFTA's impact on rural poor

The peasants of Chiapas and other rural areas of Mexico rely on their crops for their survival. Whatever they don't consume they can sell. These are basic crops, corn and beans. Now they will have to compete with agro-industry from this country. Already beans, corn, and rice are being imported. So the cost of these products will go down, and peasants will not be able to sell what they have left. They feel they are being suffocated, cut out of any possibility to survive. Again, they have nothing left to lose.

I think a lot of people throughout the country are starting to realize that something has to be done about this situation, so that's why the Zapatista movement has gained a lot of support. They are not presenting themselves as people who want to take power, take control of the government, or bring about socialism. They are saying "we want access to decent housing, health care, food, education, the basics, like any human being. We don't want to take over the government, we just want to be taken into account." They want access to the minimum things one needs to survive, to have a decent life.

They also want fair participation in the process of elections. They want to know that the results of a fair election will be respected. The electoral fraud

CACIQUES CHIAPANECOS ■ Rocha



A Chiapas landowner wonders "Why has the situation turned so thorny?" *La Jornada*.

there has been amazing. Like people throughout the country, they are tired of living under a false democracy. So, they are simply seen as people who are tired of being repressed and mistreated.

This uprising is not really something that just happened from one year to the next. The Zapatistas have been organizing for at least ten years. The Church has been a big part of this. The churches that practice liberation theology have been organizing people in the region for many years, not to fight, but just to realize that they can do something if they are together. So the seeds have been there for a long time, and I think the economic situation and NAFTA have pushed the movement into its present form. It was not a coincidence that this big action happened on Jan 1st, the day NAFTA went into effect. The government was aware of impending trouble, but they didn't want to risk the negotiations in the U.S. Congress by admitting any internal problems. If this had been known, Congress might not have ratified the agreement.

What is shocking is that the Left and the media in Mexico have been so repressed that they were not able to significantly alter the process of negotiating to approve NAFTA, and the information about a significant portion of the population that is deeply disaffected was kept out of the U.S. media as well. So this took everyone by surprise. The Zapatistas are not affiliated with any well-known Left or sectarian group. As I

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said, they are just people tired of being mistreated who are saying, if we're going to die, why not die fighting?

Prospects for change

What is really needed to have any meaningful change is a fair political process, so that the people in power are more representative of the people of the region. Only then can some constructive change actually happen. Change will be difficult however. For example, the government has said that there is no more land to redistribute back to the peasants. I'm not sure the "peace talks" are going to resolve the problem of land distribution. It's like South Africa. The big landowners are going to say, "I'm not going to give up my land, my parents were here, my grandparents were here," so that struggle is just beginning. What is the government going to do? Fight against these people they have supported all these years?

But I think a lot of people are waking up to what is happening, and a lot will depend on the upcoming presidential elections in August. The international eye is on Mexico now. Everyone is watching. This movement of two or three or as many thousands of Zapatistas as there are, no one knows, they have put the eyes of the world on Mexico. However, so far the main opposition parties have been somewhat ambivalent. They all say this was bound to happen and everyone is surprised it didn't happen earlier. No one condones violence, but they understand why the rebellion took place. But this is not really a sufficient response.

The next year will be very important, to see what happens in the rest of the country. If nothing positive comes out of the current peace talks, indigenous people and peasants in the rest of the country may join the fight. What is significant now is the government has acknowledged the existence of the Zapatistas. In the past they would have just been repressed, killed. Now, with international eyes watching, they have been forced to acknowledge these people, and to negotiate.

Manuel Camacho Sólis, the media-

tor that the President sent to Chiapas, was one of the most progressive members of the PRI (the ruling party), who was considered as one of Salinas' choices to be the candidate of the party in the upcoming election. Probably the reason he was not picked for that job was because he was too progressive, but he was the one chosen to deal with all the protesters in Mexico City last year, and he's seen as a good mediator.

The Zapatistas are saying that until their demands are met they will remain a clandestine group. So they go to these meetings with their masks and their guns ... it's amazing that the government is sitting at the table with them. Just as an aside, Subcomandante Marcos—his name comes from the names of the towns taken over by the Zapatistas—Las Margaritas, Altamirano, Rosario, Comitán, Ocosingo, and San Cristóbal de las Casas. And he is a *subcomandante* because he says he speaks as a representative of a committee of indigenous leaders. He says that anyone can be a Marcos.

[As this issue went to press, government and Zapatista leaders had reached a tentative agreement to provide schools, health clinics, and financial assistance to peasants in the region. Camacho Sólis, the government mediator, also promised electoral reforms and acknowledged the need for an overhaul of Mexico's political system. The *Boston Globe* reported, as well, that indigenous groups in Oaxaca had kidnapped 15 government and state officials, demanding meetings to address their living conditions.

In Chiapas, 278 Indian organizations have joined forces to form a statewide indigenous council, and are seeking greater say in municipal government. The paper also reported that indigenous groups are organizing to press for equity in education, saying some Indian children have been excluded from public school because a coffee cooperative their parents operated was seen as a threat to government authority. And, in early March, there were hints that Camacho Sólis might run as an opposition candidate in presidential elections this August.]



Local Organizing

In Boston, a group called *Tonantzin* (the goddess of earth) has formed. We had a press conference in which we presented several demands to the Mexican consulate. These included: an end to human rights violations in Mexico; a call to stop the bombing of civilians; negotiated settlements; long-term solutions to the economic, social, and cultural problems of indigenous people in Mexico; and unimpeded access by the media to the area of conflict.

We will have concerts and public events to educate people and raise funds to send back to Mexico. Many people have been displaced from their homes, and many people are suffering. We want to form a sister-city partnership with grassroots organizations in Chiapas and Oaxaca, and we will participate in supporting free elections through observer delegations. Other groups are forming around the country. It feels similar to the beginning of the Central America solidarity movement and that is very positive. ♦

Jorge Casas is a member of the collective at Red Sun Press, a father of two, and an activist on Mexican issues. For more information about Tonantzin, contact the Central America Solidarity Association (CASA) at 617 492-8699. RESIST readers may also want to get a copy of the latest issue of the CASA newsletter (March/April, 1994) which includes the first half of a two-part article by Subcomandante Marcos, translated into English. The article was originally printed in the Mexican newspaper La Jornada, on January 7th.

GRANTS

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TecsChange

121 Tremont Street, #311,
Boston, MA 02135.

TecsChange emerged from a workshop—Computers in the Third World—that was held at the first Boston Computers and Social Change Conference in 1991. The group was formed in order to explore the uses of computer technology to support progressive movements for social change internationally. Over the past two years, the group has offered introductory and advanced courses in WordPerfect in Spanish for the staff of local organizations working with Salvadoran refugees, and has helped to organize and implement an advanced computer training program for seven South African activists. Volunteers are currently evaluating the computer needs of several local progressive organizations.

The largest project of the group has been the testing and repair of used equipment for shipping to progressive organizations in the developing world. About 30 computers were sent to El Salvador as part of the 1993 Caravan to Rebuild El Salvador, organized by Pastors for Peace. A TecsChange member was a driver on the caravan and helped to distribute the computers to grassroots organizations. Computers have also been sent to Guatemala and South Africa.

TecsChange is working with CISPES on a campaign to collect funds and material aid, and recruit skilled volunteers, in support of the opposition in El Salvador's elections. The group is also working with others to establish a computer school that will provide low-cost computer training for grassroots groups in that country, and

develop popular training methods which can be used in other countries as well. While examining how technology and technical skills are distributed and utilized in other social contexts, members of TecsChange are also furthering their understanding of the inequities that exist at home.

RESIST's recent grant was used to hire a part-time organizer to conduct outreach and recruit additional skilled volunteers to participate in TecsChange.

New England Central America Network (NECAN)

42 Seaverns Avenue,
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130.

NECAN was founded in 1983 by 13 of New England's most active Central America solidarity committees. The purpose was to strengthen coordination among existing solidarity groups and develop long-term regional strategies. During the 1980s, NECAN served as the information, feedback and program channels between scores of local solidarity committees and the three national networks (CISPES, NISGUA, and the Nicaragua Network). For the past five years, NECAN has pursued a program of domestic links; a strategy aiming to unite the solidarity and domestic rights movements with a common agenda.

NECAN's primary partner in this effort has been Arise for Social Justice (also a RESIST grantee), a low income rights and empowerment organization in Springfield, MA. Three Arise members have traveled to Nicaragua as part of NECAN delegations, and have subsequently joined NECAN's Nicaragua Committee. Among other pro-

jects, the NECAN/Arise connection has inspired a sistering relationship between a community center in La Primavera barrio in Managua and Arise's Self-Reliance Center, two examples of sustainable development from the grassroots. In addition, the connection sparked the first ever request for a "reverse tour" — a tour by a North American organizer through Nicaragua. After traveling to Nicaragua with a NECAN delegation, Marsha Burnett (an African American organizer and AIDS activist) was asked to return to Nicaragua for a speaking tour on AIDS.

NECAN and Arise have recently decided to become more closely integrated, and as part of that process NECAN will move to Springfield where the two organizations can more effectively plan and implement joint campaigns. They hope to take their model of integrated transnational work for social justice to other parts of New England and the U.S. as well.

NECAN is also working with rural domestic activists, and recently cosponsored a delegation with the Vermont Sister Coop Project to the Limay Coop in Esteli, Nicaragua. The Vermont Coop has sponsored a revolving loan fund being used in Esteli, and the two deepened their understanding of coop operations in both countries. The delegation follow-up aims to build domestic links work elsewhere in rural New England.

RESIST's recent grant was used for expenses of a spring tour pairing Marsha Burnett with Nicaragua organizer Doña Carmen, from La Primavera. Together the two women will make connections between local organizing in low-income communities in the U.S. and in Nicaragua.

Middle East

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the interim and final periods; and a clear Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right to self-determination, including a commitment to full withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and full dismantling of the settlements in the final stage. Only such an agreement can create the necessary conditions for meaningful peace negotiations. ◇

Annual subscriptions to Challenge

magazine are \$30 for an individual; \$50 for an institution. For more information, write Challenge, P.O. Box 32107, Jerusalem, 91320, Israel. Or call 972-2-255382, or fax: 972-2-251614. E-mail: nitzotz@igc.apc.org.

For more detailed information on human rights issues and the activities of the settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, an excellent resource is the Palestine Human Rights Information Cen-

ter, 4201 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 500, Washington DC 20008. Telephone: 202-686-5116. Copies of reports compiled by the group are on file at the RESIST office.



GRANTS

In each issue of the newsletter we highlight a few recent grants made to groups around the country. In this issue we highlight grants to Central America solidarity projects. The information in these brief reports is provided by the groups themselves. For further information, please write to them at the addresses included here.

The Committee on U.S./Latin American Relations (CUSLAR)

G-29 Anabel Taylor Hall,
Cornell University,
Ithaca, NY 14853.

CUSLAR was founded in 1965 (that's right, it's been around nearly 30 years, including the nine years this newsletter editor lived in Ithaca, and is still doing great work!), by members of the Cornell United Religious Works, a group located on the university campus, in response to the U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic. What began as a study group to better understand U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America soon evolved into an action group as well, and expanded beyond the campus to include the Ithaca community and the surrounding region. In 1975, CUSLAR became part of the Center for Religion, Ethics, and Social Policy which is an umbrella organization for a number of progressive groups in the Ithaca area.

In the 1970s, CUSLAR focused on Chile and Argentina; during the '80s, the work centered on Central America; now CUSLAR is building solidarity with indigenous, feminist, human rights, labor, and

environmental groups and movements that have recently emerged in Central and Latin America. The group is committed to education about the U.S. role in the region, particularly with regard to the effects of U.S.-mandated "austerity programs." At the same time, members aspire to build a more democratic society in this country by demanding that U.S. foreign policy be conducted openly, with the informed consent of the people.

The group's ongoing work includes the Speakers' series and Latin American film series. Speakers this past year included Guatemalan Priest Ricardo Falla; a member of Peace Brigades International; Hector Vila on Cuba; and José Lobo on grassroots organizing in Nicaragua. The film series includes first run documentaries and feature films that have been overlooked by mainstream and art theatres. The recent series included a number of Cuban films introduced by their producers and/or directors. Activist work included educational and cultural exchanges between Ithaca and Cuba; anti-NAFTA work; and human rights work on behalf of Guatemala.

Because CUSLAR views racism both here and towards people in other countries as a critical element in the formation of foreign policy, the group has sponsored a number of events to promote respect for difference including a Black and Latino Unity conference, and a meeting on the State of Indian America. The group has also developed a speaker's bureau of Latino students at Cornell to address area middle and high school classes about the culture and history of their native countries.

RESIST's recent grant was used to

print and mail the Fall 1993 edition of the CUSLAR newsletter, which focused on the continued role of the military in many of Latin America's "civilian democracies."

Neighbor to Neighbor

(New York chapter),

135 West 4th Street

New York, NY 10012.

Neighbor to Neighbor was founded in the mid-'80s with the purpose of bringing home to people in the U.S. the tragic cost of U.S. intervention in Central America, and to organize to stop the bloodshed. From 1985 - 1988 the group focused on mobilizing grassroots support to end the Contra War in Nicaragua. From 1989 - 1992, Neighbor to Neighbor lobbied Congress to cut aid to the Salvadoran military, and activated a boycott of Salvadoran coffee that increased pressure on the repressive coffee oligarchy, and eventually pushed Procter and Gamble (maker of Folger's coffee) and other major U.S. companies to publicly advocate for a negotiated end to the war.

With the signing of the Peace Accords in El Salvador in January, 1992, Neighbor to Neighbor ended the coffee boycott and began its Coffee for Justice campaign. This is a project designed to encourage fair economic policies towards El Salvador from the U.S. government and corporations, while fostering economic justice within El Salvador. Neighbor to Neighbor, Oxfam America, and Equal Exchange (an alternative trade organization) have joined forces to import and market Cafe Salvador, grown by peasant farmers and coffee cooperatives in El Salvador.

Neighbor to Neighbor believes the current transition period in El Salvador is an opportunity to develop a pro-active project that seeks new solutions to economic disparity in the region, while securing the promises of the peace accords. The purpose of the Coffee for Justice campaign is to help restructure power relationships within the coffee industry in order to define new social and economic relationships in both countries.

The group will continue to carry out its educational and organizing projects with a particular focus on campus organizing.

RESIST's recent grant was used for a slide projector and post-production costs for a slide-show on El Salvador that is used as part of the Coffee for Justice campaign.

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Join the Resist Pledge Program

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge. Pledges account for over 25% of our income. By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder, along with your newsletter. We will keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded, and the other work being done at Resist. So take the plunge and become a Resist Pledge! We count on you, and the groups we fund count on us.

☐ **Yes! I would like to become a Resist Pledge. I'd like to pledge \$_____ / _____ (monthly, bi-**

monthly, quarterly, 2x a year, yearly).

☐ **Enclosed is my pledge contribution of \$_____.**

☐ **I can't join the pledge program just now, but here's a contribution to support your work. \$_____**

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Resist

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