

CAFTA. cont. from pg. 1

provisions, especially in the areas intellectual property rights and sanitary regulations. In particular, U.S.-based pharmaceutical companies have demanded legal changes in the Central American countries that would prevent generic drug companies from manufacturing low-cost medicines. The government of Guatemala has been particularly adamant in opposing such measures, and the vice-president has gone as far as to threaten to pull the country out of CAFTA if the USTR does not let up. Such heavy-handed changes demonstrate the constantly shifting finish line for CAFTA, as the US leverages its economic might to appease corporate supporters.

Meanwhile, in January Presidents from the five Central American agreed to open a new regional facility for anti-terrorism and counter-narcotics monitoring. The facility would accompany a new U.S.-sponsored police school (*see ILEA article, pg. 3*) that is expected to open this year in El Salvador. The rise in U.S. military aid and influence to Central America is clearly essential to the strategy of expanding corporate trade, and these new military facilities demonstrate a move towards combating increased popular resistance with force. Indeed, the Salvadoran government showed once again its repressive bent by threatening to repress any anti-CAFTA protests around implementation day, and followed though by attacking protesters – leading to at least 5 injuries –while sending in riot police to take-over of one San Salvador public hospital where workers were protesting. The social movement was not deterred, back on the streets in even larger numbers on March 1, with the message “the fight against CAFTA will not be stopped!”

To see press releases and articles about CAFTA implementation, check out www.stopcafta.org

Schafik. cont. from pg. 1

slandering the Schafik’s presidential aspirations, questioning the FMLN’s commitment to democracy, and warning that U.S.-El Salvador relations would be jeopardized if the FMLN won the presidency. ARENA campaign ads likened the FMLN to the terrorists who attacked the World Trade Center claiming bin Laden “had a friend and faithful ally in Schafik.” Ultimately, the dirty campaign succeeded in turning the tide in the elections, and the ARENA candidate Tony Saca won the presidency.

Sadly, the rightwing tactic of using threats of terrorism and anti-communist propaganda to distort history is alive and well. That the architects of the death-squad era again occupy the U.S. government’s highest policy-making positions is testament to the fact that the myths of the U.S. genocidal counterrevolutions in Central America remain powerful today. The Right’s vicious attacks on Schafik over the decades are really attacks on the political values of the FMLN. Far from being a personal vendetta against Schafik, the U.S. appears poised to undermine any political force that remains true to the principles demonstrated by the FMLN: the mobilization of the social movements in order to build a new El Salvador free from U.S. influence. It may seem that little has changed in the U.S., but in El Salvador things could not be more different.

Schafik Presente!—FMLN Adelante!

The victories of March 12 and the massive hero’s farewell granted during the funeral celebration of January 29 solidified Schafik’s legacy in the ongoing struggle for social and economic justice for El Salvador. The impetus for change can be traced through the work of Schafik, who remains a popular symbol of the struggle dedicated to revolutionary principles.

The FMLN is no less or more radical than before Schafik’s death, and

indeed the increased popularity of the FMLN owes to the party’s steadfast support for the social movement. Large demonstrations against the US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) in the days following Schafik’s funeral proved that there would be no neutralization of the left, as does the important victories won in the March 12 elections in El Salvador.

The FMLN took up arms to bring down a military dictatorship and to bring about socialism, and with the fall of the military’s monopolization of power, the political project of the FMLN remains the realization of the democratic revolution they began with the toppling of military rule. This strategy was decided by members of the FMLN and has been reaffirmed many times over through internal elections. Shaped by this commitment, the FMLN will continue fighting for El Salvador’s poor majority. By addressing real needs for broad social and economic change – for a living wage, lower costs of living, an economic model that champions people’s needs over the corporate right to plunder – the FMLN will forever be at odds with U.S. imperialism.

As more and more leftist leaders critical of Washington’s neoliberal agenda are voted into office across Latin America, the Bush Administration is finding dwindling support south of the Rio Grande. El Salvador has again become a key battleground in the struggle for self-determination in Latin America. With Bush’s allies fewer than ever, El Salvador’s ever-loyal rightwing ARENA government has taken on heightened importance in the region. But while Bush and the ARENA party struggle to solidify U.S. power in El Salvador, the social movement is united behind the FMLN, providing a serious threat to the Bush Administration’s plans for domination in Central America.

The gains made by the FMLN in the March 12 elections continue the tide of leftist triumphs in Latin America, but aside from any election results, the social movement in El Salvador will struggle on. And in the years to come every time a resolute fist is held high in the air it is a salute to Schafik, but also a salute to all those who remain and who have come before. Ultimately it is a call to unite: for the continuance and realization of the Salvadoran revolution.

- Shane Stewart, Boston CISPES

EL SALVADOR Watch



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A Fitting Tribute to a Fallen Revolutionary Leader

On March 12 the leftist FMLN party made significant gains during El Salvador’s legislative and municipal elections, and the apparent victory in San Salvador was dedicated to one of Latin America’s great leftist leaders. Weeks before, an estimated 100,000 people overwhelmed the streets of San Salvador in one of El Salvador’s largest demonstrations since 1980. The gathering commemorated the contributions of historic FMLN party leader, Schafik Handál, who collapsed and died of heart failure on January 24. He had been returning from the inauguration of Bolivia’s newly elected populist president Evo Morales at the time. A renowned leader of the Salvadoran armed-struggle and a signer of the 1992 Peace Accords, Schafik is broadly viewed by Salvadorans as a hero of the struggle that top-



Shafik Handal died on January 24, 2005

pled the era of military dictatorship and fought U.S. intervention in El Salvador. Schafik Handál was also a staunch internationalist, and a friend to leftist movements and revolutionary parties throughout the Americas. In many ways the massive demonstration of January 29 represented the Salvadoran people’s reclaiming of their legacy of popular struggle.

The Right-Wing’s War On History: Tarnishing the FMLN’s legacy

As FMLN presidential candidate in 2004, Schafik became the lightning rod for relentless propaganda attacks by El Salvador’s rightwing media, the ARENA party, and the U.S. State Department. Perhaps most damning were declarations made by high-level US officials like Otto Reich and Roger Noriega

continued on pg 4

More CAFTA Failures for the Bush Administration as Protests against Free Trade Agreement Continue in El Salvador

With CAFTA set to go into effect in El Salvador, protests filled the streets on February 28 and March 1, the latest in a string of events demonstrating the continued failure of the U.S.-Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA). The Bush Administration had hoped to celebrate the implementation of CAFTA on Jan. 1, but was forced to delay the start date. Finally, Salvadoran President Tony Saca came to Washington DC for a meeting with President Bush during which they announced that the U.S. and El Salvador would move ahead alone in beginning CAFTA on March 1. While the meeting got little media attention in the U.S., Saca and the right-wing ARENA party played up the visit in the Salvadoran press and in their electoral campaigning (*see article, page 2.*)

The Salvadoran social movement responded by calling for massive protests, and a coalition of national organizations, came together to shut down major highways around the country on March 1 (*see social movement declaration, page 3.*) In the months leading up to the implementation day, social movements were reinvigorated in their struggles

and have declared their intention to continue mobilizing against the worst aspects of the agreement. In El Salvador, the controversial legal reforms have already been approved by the Legislative Assembly, but on the day that CAFTA went into effect the FMLN announced a case before the Supreme Court challenging the constitutionality of CAFTA.

The other countries that ratified the agreement – Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic – will join CAFTA in the following months once they bring their laws in line with U.S. recommendations. Meanwhile, in Costa Rica, the only country that has yet to ratify the deal, former president and Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias was expected to win back the presidency by a landslide in early February. In a surprise turn, his opponent Ottón Solís surged in the polls at the last minute, carried by his objection to Arias’s strong pro-CAFTA stance. Arias ultimately prevailed, but Solís’s opposition party carried enough seats in the legislative assembly to make it very difficult for Arias to pass CAFTA.

The U.S. Trade Representative has been insisting that the six countries involved in the agreement go beyond the original

continued on pg 4

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Position of the Salvadoran Social Movement regarding the US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) as it is implemented in El Salvador

The organizations: Popular Social Block for Real Democracy (BPS), Popular Resistance Movement October 12 (MPR-12), Salvadoran Unionist Front (FSS), the National Coordinator of Agriculture, the National Movement of Informal Sector Vendors [among others] express to the Salvadoran people the following declaration before CAFTA's implementation on March 1:

That CAFTA, imposed in the early dawn of December 17, 2004... without any discussion or consultation with different sectors of the country, will accentuate profound economic discrepancies between the United States and El Salvador, given that the economy of the United States is 950 times larger than that of this country... When CAFTA is implemented on March 1, it will deepen these discrepancies, destroying the national economy and especially certain sectors:

- * In the agricultural sector, CAFTA will harm 400,000 families producing basic grains (corn, beans, and rice) consumed by the majority of El Salvador's population, because the large producers of these grains in the United States are subsidized by the U.S. government and have access to superior quality technology.

- * Equally affected will be tens of thousands of pork, beef, poultry and milk producing families. They will be faced with large importations of these products and their locally produced products will not be competitive.

- * More than 65,000 families in the informal economy sector - selling CDs, DVDs, clothes, shoes, watches, cassettes, and other electronic devices - are suffering persecution and legal repression, a situation that will worsen when CAFTA enters into force.

- * CAFTA protects the foreign monopolies that produce medicines, which is why the general population will not be able to obtain medicines at cheaper prices than the imported patented ones. The national companies and laboratories will be left out of the competition and destroyed.

- * CAFTA opens doors to the privatization of public services - education, health, potable water, generation and transmission of electricity, ports, and airports - further affecting the poor of this country.

- * Furthermore, CAFTA violates the Constitution and our national sovereignty; now transnational corporations, in defense of their own interests, can sue the Salvadoran state before international courts.

On a general level, the application of CAFTA will generate:

- * More unemployment and underemployment in distinct economic activities (livestock, agriculture, industrial activities, services, informal economy and others)

- * Increased emigration of people from this country in search of opportunities to survive.

- * Promotion of anti-labor legal reforms, disrespect for national and international labor norms, and the power to pay salaries below minimum wage.

- * Increased deterioration of the environment due to changes in the agricultural structure, and the lack of controls over predatory big business and their exploitation of our natural resources.

- * Damaging health consequences for a growing population of poor people.

- * Increased poverty and misery in the country.

- * Accentuated gender inequalities, placing women in the lowest position in the workplace, receiving the lowest salaries and most discrimination, increasing the risk of familiar disintegration...

- * Increase in the unequal balance of commerce and the public finance deficit.

In the end, CAFTA is a "commercial" instrument that violates human, labor, economic, social and cultural rights of

our country's population. CAFTA will benefit the neoliberal economic groups that control the state and economy of our country, such as the great financial speculators...and those that benefit from the import and export of goods, control commerce, as well as sweatshops, agribusinesses, and transnational corporations from the US....

Therefore:

The organized social movement reaffirms its rejection of CAFTA's implementation, given the negative impacts in the distinct economic and social sectors and to our national sovereignty.

We demand the repeal of the laws and measures recently approved only for the benefit of the interests of large transnational and national companies in the moment of CAFTA's implementation.

We make a call to all of the social organizations, the affected sectors, and the general Salvadoran population to unite together to denounce and confront CAFTA's implementation, to establish strategies resistance against these measures that will cause harm to the poorest Salvadorans, to the producers in the affected sectors, to the small and medium sized businesses, and to others.

-San Salvador, February 22nd, 2006

In the face of the devastating effects of the implementation of the US-Central American Free Trade Agreement:

UNITY AND STRUGGLE!



Against CAFTA: 10,000 protest on March 1, 2006, implementation day for CAFTA in El Salvador.

Central America is not for Sale! Protesting Saca's visit to the White House

In late February the president of El Salvador, Antonio Saca, visited his "friend" President Bush at the White House. Among the topics discussed was the extension of *Temporary Protected Status* or TPS which was granted to Salvadorans a few years ago after consecutive natural disasters in El Salvador left much of the population devastated and without work. It was due to expire this year but President Bush made a surprise announcement to extend it, a move seen by many as nothing more than electioneering as part of the ARENA campaign. Saca was happy to brag about his excellent relations with President Bush by explaining to the press that he was the first Central American president to ever be an actual guest at the Blair House, which is reserved for close allies of the US president.

More than being just buddies, both presidents have a political and economic bond around the neoliberal agenda, and more specifically around CAFTA. In addition, both have had to deal with strong internal opposition as millions continue to resist and protest those policies. In solidarity with the fervent Central American resistance movement, a group of protestors congregated in front of the White House on February 24 to show our opposition to CAFTA and to Saca. The protest was organized by the Stop CAFTA Coalition (of which CISPES is a leading member),



Jennie Swanson

and the local FMLN-DC, and we made our presence heard. It was windy, but a solid 30 people stood in Lafayette Park for more than an hour with banners, chanting and talking to the Latino press. Some speeches were made and several Salvadoran leaders assured that the extension of the TPS that Saca attempted to take credit for was in fact the result of years of grassroots organizing within the U.S. They

exposed Saca as an opportunistic liar, and ardently asserted that Salvadorans will not be taken for fools.

As emotions grew, we marched around the White House yelling mottos like: "Central America not for sale!" and "Saca, hypocrite and liar!" Suddenly, a group of well-dressed Salvadorans left the Blair House and hustled to a flock of luxury cars. It was Saca himself! The entourage pulled out, and his car had to pass right in front us in order to be able to enter the White House. Needless to say, this was the culminating point of the protest as Salvadorans and solidarity activists alike screamed at the top of our lungs. In the name of many Salvadorans who will never be able to get so close to their president, we let him know that no matter how much he tries to run away, he will always be confronted by protests and resistance!

--Christine Raine, CISPES National Program Organizer

From CAFTA to the ILEA

US Economic Policy Driving Repression and Militarization in Central America

The battle to confront militarization in Central America is heating up. As part of its national strategy, CISPES has pledged to continue to fight the implementation of CAFTA, privatization and other neoliberal policies in El Salvador, while also challenging the tools of economic imperialism: violence, repression, and militarization. The most blatant of such tools is the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) which is set to open this year in El Salvador. Clearly there is a connection between the imposition of free neoliberal policies and the increase in repression; it's no coincidence that since CAFTA was first proposed in Central America, US military training and aid to the region has increased dramatically. El Salvador is once again near the top of the list of recipients of U.S. military aid, with almost \$23 million since CAFTA negotiations were announced in 2002.

The agreement to open the ILEA in El Salvador was signed by the US and Salvadoran governments in the summer of 2005. Though the project focuses on training police forces, it evokes memories of the training of repression and human rights abuses through the US-sponsored School of the Americas (SOA)

in the 1980s. Indeed, backers of the ILEA promise that only civilians would be trained there, but in fact the text of the agreement leaves open the possibility of military training. The ILEA could enroll as many as 1500 students a year, more than the current manifestation of the SOA in Ft. Benning, Georgia.

The Salvadoran Legislative Assembly ratified the establishment of the ILEA in late November despite the opposition of the FMLN party, and despite protests outside of the assembly the day it was passed. The FMLN and social movement organizations argued that the ILEA agreement (which was never released to the public) should have been passed by a 2/3 majority since it constitutes an international treaty.

Organizations in El Salvador recognize the ILEA as a tool of US economic policy in the Americas, and as part of an effort to expand US influence in the region in order to thwart continued resistance and the leftward shift of many South American governments. El Salvador is at the strategic center of such policies: its president Tony Saca is close with President Bush, it already has a US military base and an FBI office, and its government was the first to implement

CAFTA. Therefore, the placement of the ILEA in El Salvador (after failed attempts for an ILEA-Sur in Costa Rica and Panama) is logical.

The State Department's statement of purpose says that the ILEA will serve to "enhance the functioning of free markets through improved legislation and law enforcement; and increase social, political, and economic stability by combating narcotics trafficking and crime." Salvadorans claim that it will be used to consolidate the tactics of repression already being practiced by the police, especially since the "war on terrorism" is used to justify profiling activists and cracking down on peaceful protests.

A campaign to stop the construction of the ILEA, or to force the US and Salvadoran governments to remove such a training facility, is essential in light of the continued struggle against CAFTA and concerns about increased militarization in the Americas. CISPES is developing a campaign to stop the construction of the ILEA in El Salvador by pressuring the US Congress to not fund this new SOA. Join us!

Go to www.cispes.org/ilea or call your Congressional Representative and tell her/him "NO ILEA IN EL SALVADOR!"