

IN SHORT

With God on his side

"A good Christian man." That's how one local businessman attending the Full Gospel Business Association Conference in Portland last month described Rios Montt, the featured dinner speaker. But as the audience welcomed the born-again former Guatemalan president with applause, an unidentified woman quietly stepped to the microphone and set the record straight, reports Peter Dammann. "Rios Montt," she said, "is responsible for the slaughter of 15,000 Guatemalans...."

Silence fell over the crowd as a handful of conservatively dressed activists seated among them rose and unfurled their banners. According to Amnesty International, as Guatemala's president during 1982-83, Montt racked up one of the world's worst human rights records. Thousands of Mayan Indians, Catholic priests and lay workers, says the human rights group, died in the "massive extra-judicial executions" that thrived during Montt's rule.

The hotel's security guards quickly hustled the protesters, all members of the Portland Central America Solidarity Committee, from the room. "After I was elected president," said Montt through an interpreter, in an address that otherwise eschewed the political for the biblical, "there were no more subversives. It was not because we killed our subversives. They were defeated by God."

Nuclear blockade

A week after Montt's exhortation in Portland, antinuclear activists occupied a bridge in the seacoast city, protesting the arrival of a nuclear-capable flotilla. Their stand delayed the docking of the fleet's flagship—the U.S.S. *Leahy*—for half an hour, reports Rich Lochner. Of the 40 occupying the bridge, seven were arrested for disorderly conduct after refusing police orders to leave. Following the *Leahy* was the U.S.S. *Merrill*—a test ship for the new Tomahawk and sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM). Beginning this month, 758 nuclear SLCMs will be deployed on Navy ships, according to the Institute for Policy Studies. Though the Navy won't confirm or deny the presence of nuclear weapons on a ship, 80 percent of Navy ships carry them, says the Center for Defense Information.

The fleet docked in Portland for the annual Rose Festival, a carnival-like celebration on the downtown waterfront. Protestors hung signs to greet them: "Welcome sailors, but not your nukes." Some commented on the festival atmosphere: "The hoopla makes it sound like it's a good time to bring the family to see these ships that carry weapons designed to destroy all life." Sailors on the *Leahy* were not surprised by their brief stoppage. One told local TV, "It seems like everywhere we put into port there's a protest." The *Leahy*'s past is just as sordid: named after a U.S. admiral who directed forces in the 1912 invasion of Nicaragua, it was also the flagship for a 1983 Central American Navy task force sent to threaten Nicaraguan ports.

Fortune's "Believe It or Not"

Fortune magazine's June 11 issue argues that the recent furor over megabucks for top executives is uncalled for since the corporation's shareholders aren't grouching about management pay. The author avoids unnecessary talk of managerial waste by a top-heavy bureaucracy, the increased degree of control that managers have over their own salaries and the great disparity between what executives and workers make (see *In These Times*, June 11). Instead, he zeroes in on the heart of the matter: "For all the furor on the talk shows and op-ed pages we have little evidence that the people and institutions whose own money is on the line feel aggrieved by top executives' pay levels." Not so sure that even regular readers of *Fortune* would buy that narrow line of argument, the article's title neatly hedged its bets: "Believe it or not, top-executive pay may make sense."

Network against concessions

More than 650 labor activists from throughout the U.S. and Canada met June 15-17 in Ypsilanti, Mich., to discuss new ways of building union solidarity in organizing and bargaining, reports Steve Early. Sponsored by the Detroit-based Labor Education and Research Project (LERP), which publishes *Labor Notes*, the conference attracted scores of local union officers, stewards and committee members from the UAW, IBT, USWA, CWA, ATU, APWU, NALC and other unions. Plenary speeches and workshop presentations about 1984 negotiations involving coal miners, postal workers and auto workers stressed the need for well-organized opposition to further concessions. Conference participants also made plans to formalize and expand a LERP-assisted "solidarity network." The network consists of local community-labor strike support groups that have developed around the country during anti-concession struggles against Greyhound, McDonald Douglass, and other companies. Such groups now exist—sometimes with official union sponsorship—in Toledo, Boston, Providence, R.I., and Long Beach, Calif. "The Network is not meant to substitute for the official organizations and channels of the labor movement," said LERP staff member Jane Slaughter. "But it is our observation that there is a place for this sort of catalytic action that sometimes brings official support in its trail, as happened in the Greyhound strike last year."

—Beth Maschinot



STEGAC workers occupied the Guatemala City Coke plant for three and a half months.

Coke workers victorious in Guatemala

WASHINGTON—A 14-week labor dispute between 460 Guatemalan employees and the Coca-Cola Company ended last month when the union signed an agreement with the makers of "the real thing" after 48 nearly continuous hours of grueling negotiations in San Jose, Costa Rica. The agreement scored a major victory for the union—the *Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Embotelladora Guatemalteca SA Anexos y Conexos*, or STEGAC—and could prove to be an important precedent for labor relations throughout Guatemala.

Employees at the principal Guatemalan Coke bottling plant, located in Guatemala City and known as EGSA, had occupied the facility since February 18, when managers of the franchise announced EGSA would close its doors the next day due to financial insolvency. The collective bargaining agreement in effect at the time was declared null and void, and a massive \$9 million debt was passed over to angry Coke shareholders. An international boycott of Coke, announced in Geneva April 7 to protest EGSA's closing was followed by work stoppages at

Coke franchises in Mexico, Sweden and Norway.

Signed May 27, the Coke-STEGAC truce restores recognition of the collective bargaining agreement STEGAC said had been violated by Coke, and guarantees retention of the work force at the plant after EGSA has been resold. The agreement has been endorsed by the Guatemalan Ministry of Labor.

"STEGAC is one of the most effective unions in a country where this [a plant occupation] just isn't done," said negotiating team member Sally Cornwell. "This is a symbol for other Guatemalan unions." (U.S. labor and human rights groups in Washington say 13 labor leaders, from other Guatemalan unions have disappeared since November.)

The current controversy at EGSA can be traced back to the late '70s, when a two million member Geneva-based labor organization, the International Union of Food & Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) sponsored a global Coke boycott after seven STEGAC members were killed in violent confrontations with EGSA's previous management. The IUF boycott of Coke in 1980 led to a May 1980 collective bargaining agreement at EGSA, which is believed to be the first negotiated settlement between an international labor organization and a multinational corporation. One of the IUF's organizing

strategies is to force multinationals like Coke to negotiate with organized labor across national borders.

The May 1980 agreement at EGSA called for Coke to resell the franchise, hire new managers, recognize STEGAC and compensate widows of the seven slain labor leaders. The contract was due to expire in May 1985. The IUF called off the international boycott and few complaints were heard from either side until the abrupt February announcement that EGSA was deeply in debt and would close.

At a Washington, D.C., press conference held two months after the EGSA occupation began, a U.S. labor delegation that traveled to Guatemala City to investigate the occupation charged that Coke deliberately collaborated with the franchise owners in EGSA's sudden closing. The Coca-Cola Company's goal, they said, was to shift business to two less active, non-union Guatemalan bottling plants directly owned by Coke in Tetahuleu and Puerto Barrios.

Coke denied the charges. In a March 12 letter to the head of the AFL-CIO Food and Beverage division, Coke employee relations director Michael Semrau said his company "neither participates in nor influences the closing of profitable businesses." He said the company met all contractual obligations to workers at the plant.

SYLVIA



TODAY THE WHITE HOUSE REVEALED THAT A SUMMIT MEETING, WHICH WAS TO TAKE PLACE LATER THIS MONTH BETWEEN PRESIDENT REAGAN AND SOVIET PRESIDENT CHERNENKO IN A CALIFORNIA HOT TUB, HAD BEEN

by Nicole Hollander



CALLED OFF FOR SECURITY REASONS. "THOSE SECRET SERVICE GUYS NEVER TAKE OFF THEIR JACKETS, LET ALONE ANYTHING ELSE," SAID A WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN.

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Initially, at least, Coke refused to negotiate, saying the 1980 collective bargaining agreement involved EGSA owners and STEGAC only, and not Coca-Cola. "The plant is not Coke property," said Carlton Curtis, manager of media relations for Coca-Cola in Atlanta. "There is a misunderstanding about the agreement and the five years. When an independent franchise ceases to operate for whatever reason...that affects the contract between that contract holder and the franchise owner. That's the extent of it."

Coke agreed to negotiation, said Curtis, when it became clear that STEGAC employees did not want severance pay, but intended to remain at the plant until Coke agreed to find new owners and restore the 1980 agreement. But according to Stan Gacek, official with the United Food and Commercial Workers in Washington, D.C., and an observer at the Costa Rica negotiations, Coke was "very concerned about the possibility of a boycott. They were very concerned about their reputation being damaged."

Currently, STEGAC members remain at the plant as a care and maintenance force, and will soon receive reduced wages for their work, retroactive to February 18, until Coke finds new owners for EGSA. Former EGSA managers have not been seen or heard from since mid-February and are thought to have left the country. And Guatemalan authorities have not yet completed their investigation into past deaths at the plant. When one Washington labor official asked the Guatemalan interior minister when findings from that probe will be released, the minister said, "That's anybody's guess."

—Barbara Yuill

Blacks charge voting fraud

TUNICA, MISS.—Last November, when Lawyer Porter Jr. and five other blacks ran for county and district offices here, the objective was to take political control of the county. Sixty-five percent of the registered voters and 73 percent of the population in this north Mississippi county are black.

Because of their numbers and their organized effort, the black candidates expected to win here in the poorest county in Mississippi. It came as a shock when they lost to six local white candidates. They quickly yelled foul play and filed a federal lawsuit asking that the election be thrown out because of voting fraud, bribery and denial of voting and constitutional rights to blacks. The suit—filed by Alvin Chambliss of the North Mississippi Rural Legal Services—was the first case filed after the 1982 revisions in the Voting Rights Law.

Candidate Porter claimed that open and free elections couldn't be held here because of voting fraud, vote-buying schemes and other voting and constitutional violations. "We do not have open and free elections in Tunica County," Porter said, "and black voters are not allowed to elect or vote for a candidate of

their choice."

At a hearing in Oxford, Miss., earlier this year, other black Tunica residents testified during a five-day court hearing to charges similar to those made by Porter.

Voter Gloria Starks testified she was given \$10 and a six-pack of beer to vote for Lawyer Porter's opponent, Wallace Franklin. She said other blacks received either money or beer for their votes. Campaign workers for Franklin, however, denied her charges. Franklin defeated Porter by a margin of 150 votes—455 to 305. Beatrice Robinson testified that an election worker who helped her with voting didn't allow her to vote for the candidate of her choice.

Mrs. Robinson, who can't read or write, said the worker—a black woman working for a white candidate—told her not to vote for the black candidates. The election worker denies this.

Robert Hall, a young, articulate black election official, mentioned during the hearing that he didn't like the way the balloting was handled at the Robinsonville precinct where he worked during the election. According to Hall, C.P. Owens, a wealthy white landowner, placed himself in a position between an election clerk and a balloting table in order to intimidate black voters.

Blacks were also forced to vote in twos and were not allowed to take sample ballots into the voting booths. This scared some elderly blacks and prevented them from voting. The Robinsonville precinct is 75 percent black.

Prosecutor Chambliss, in asking the court to throw the election out, said it was filled with "fraud and outright denial of potential black voters to vote in the election."

Judge William Keady of the Northern Mississippi Federal Judicial District disagreed with Chambliss. In a 33-page opinion issued in April he said: "The evidence fails to convince us that the general election in Tunica County was held under practices that discriminated against black voters or that the election results might have been affected by racially discriminatory practices. Mere error in an election, if such occurred here, is not enough to invalidate a state election."

"This decision is a slap in the face of every black American," said Joe Joyner, a black candidate for Supervisor, District 4, who lost to George Cloud, a white candidate. He added that the ruling does the same thing to blacks in Tunica that whites "have been doing to us all the time."

Chambliss said he was shocked by the ruling. He also said he has been asked by his client to appeal the decision.

Tunica has a population of 9,000. Ninety-nine percent of the 5,000 residents in the town who receive food stamps are black; 45 percent of the population who are over the age of 21 can't read or write. The county's major industry is farming.

Despite the ruling and the overwhelming poverty, Lawyer Porter Jr. and other blacks say they won't be stopped from making further attempts to gain political power for blacks in Tunica County.

—Joseph Delaney

Interview: Devlin on socialism and women

Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, longtime Irish civil rights activist, is still trailed by the "fiery" tag the press gave her when she took Westminster by storm in 1969. In her maiden speech as an Irish member of Parliament she forthrightly criticized England's role in Ireland's "British problem."

Streaks of grey now run through the auburn hair of this 36-year-old mother of three who remains unbending in her views regarding British occupation of Irish soil. But the fiery label is belied by an eloquence and soft-spoken manner that any British aristocrat would envy.

Three years after surviving an assassination attempt, McAliskey made a recent speaking tour of four U.S. cities. We talked in her Chicago Sheraton Hotel room, which she found "above my station."

You've often said that the fundamental issue facing Ireland is partition. What was the legacy of that 1921 decision to divide Ireland?

People often forget the two sides of partition. Not only did it create the distortion that is Northern Ireland, but it also created the distortion that is southern Ireland. Ireland is a country created after a civil war. It is only 60 years old. It's only when you've been there for some time that you realize southern Ireland is an emerging nation with, although I don't like the phrase, a "Third World economy" sitting there slop in western Europe. It's a nation whose development is thwarted by the unresolved situation between the north and the south and between Ireland and Britain.

What was the effect of partitioning on Northern Ireland?

The legacy of partition in the north has been much worse than in the south. The northern state was the undemocratic rump artificially created against the democratic will of the Irish people, by threat of armed insurrection by the national minority (Loyalists). In order to maintain the state, Catholics—the native population, disloyal to the state—had to be excluded from every walk of life above the bottom level. That created a situation of social and economic hardship and political discrimination for 40 percent of the population, which sparked off the civil rights movement. From there the question of seeking reform from within the state became a realization that the state was the opposite of reform. So in order to get basic human rights the whole partition experiment had to be dissolved. And the question of self-determination was opened up again.

More than 25 percent of the south's blue-collar workers are employed in American-owned plants. Some Americans think the U.S. economic involvement

tion. What are your thoughts on that?

Some Irish-American businessmen have used the phrase, "You'd be better off under us than under the British." What they don't understand is that we don't want to be under anybody. The needs of the Irish people are not exorbitant. We do not want to have a major defense budget for nuclear arms or to be part of NATO. Our basic needs are to feed and clothe and provide for the liberties of our population of 4.5 million people in a basically agricultural society that is developing oil, natural gas and mineral wealth. What I fear is that before we even get to the point of self-determination it will be predetermined for us by the multinationals and American investors.

An American Indian journalist said last year that the hidden story of the 20th century is the struggle of the land-based peoples to survive. Does that struggle continue today in Ireland?

As a socialist I speak for myself. I come from the peasantry that throughout history has thrown up good socialists (laughter). To me the thing that is indefensible in Ireland is the waste of the land created by the attempt to secure Ireland's economic future by external investment in large

80 percent of the landholdings in Ireland are less than 100 acres. Farmers were encouraged to borrow money to develop their land and compete on European terms. Now the bubble has burst, the small farmer is unable to compete and cannot repay the banks. And so people who've inherited the land from their fathers are being forced off the land, not by Cromwell and not by the British aristocracy, but by the Irish banks. Our options are cooperative farming or getting out of the European Common Market. The degree to which Ireland could become self-sufficient in the area of food is phenomenal. But the land is being used to produce grass for cows to eat.

What is life like for women in Northern Ireland?

Similar to that in most conservative places: the women's place is in the home. For working women we have legislation from the United Kingdom demanding an end to sex discrimination and equal pay for equal work done. But we are a million light-years from the opportunity for women in Ireland to do equal work. Many women work in the evening or while their kids are at school. These jobs are in the bars, auxiliary work in the hospitals or cleaning houses in the better areas of the city. The wages are so low you can work a full week and still not reach the national poverty level.

Have these conditions translated into a strong feminist movement?

Both north and south the feminist movement is small.



Bernadette Devlin McAliskey

plants.

Before the Irish people were driven off their land by the British in the early 1600s, the land was common to the people. Perhaps something we have in common with the native Americans is that one person does not own the land. Through the Land Acts at the start of this century the land was returned in very small plots to individual people. So we developed a concept of a nation of small farmers.

Yet we cannot compete with the agricultural and economic policies of Europe where a viable farming unit is a minimum of 100 acres. More than

The strong puritanical consciousness throughout Ireland militates against it. And the national question cuts across it. While people like myself who are feminist within the national movement support the broad feminist movement and the question of women's rights within society, the feminist movement as such does not support the nationalist movement. They feel their chances of making progress on women's rights will be hampered by the bad company of women like myself, so they avoid the national question like the plague.

—Graham Clarke