

### Church meets state

Texas politics took a down-home turn this month as 10,000 people gathered for the founding convention of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) network. The IAF, a non-partisan group of diverse religious organizations, aims to work for social reform and "teach people how to be involved in public life" by creating a "political voice" for families and congregations. During the pre-election convention many political candidates, including Democratic governor-elect Ann Richards, pledged to work closely with the network. Her opponent, Clayton Williams, however, refused to make such a commitment. No doubt the subsequent boos he received echoed in the ballot box and in his ears on November 6.

### Another reason to cheer

Western Massachusetts' None of the Above (NOTA) write-in campaign has been declared a success (see "In Short," Oct. 31). The greatest number of NOTA ballots were predictably cast in the governor's race, which pitted "Democrat in Republican pinstripes" John Silber against traditional conservative William Weld. Weld won the race, but NOTA picked up as much as 8.6 percent of the vote in Northampton, the largest town in the region. While the Pioneer Valley Pro-Democracy Campaign targeted only six towns with its symbolic strategy, NOTA votes were reported by election clerks throughout New England. This is one campaign that didn't end on election day, reports Thomas Anderson: legislation to place the NOTA option on the ballot as a binding alternative to the two-party state will soon be introduced in the Massachusetts legislature. That way, if NOTA picked up more votes than any candidate in a given election, a new election would have to be called with a fresh batch of candidates.

### From Vietnam, with love

Inspired by a march against Mideast intervention in New York on October 20 (see "Etc.," Oct. 31), anti-war veterans are making a conscious effort to support conscientious objectors. Broken Rifle Press has established a Fund for Conscience and Resistance to provide GIs who refuse to fight in the Persian Gulf with copies of *Days of Decision*, an oral history of conscientious objectors during the Vietnam War. Donations can be sent to P.O. Box 749, Trenton, NJ 08607.

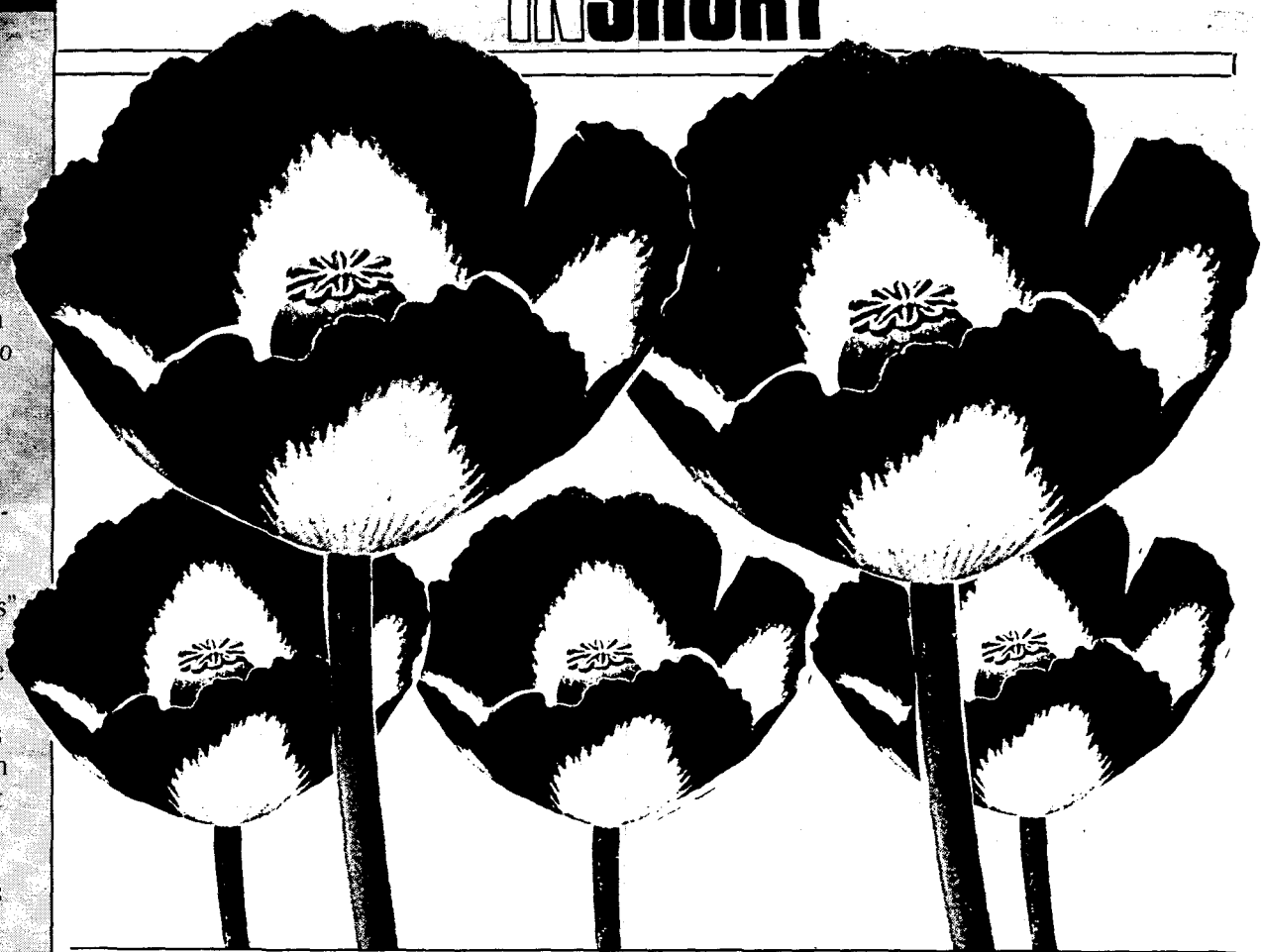
### Reading, writing and right-winging

Michigan's Hillsdale College, a little-known right-wing campus, is out to establish itself as the academic center of conservative intellectual thought, reports Margaret Quigley. President George Roche recently hosted a Boston reception to publicize Hillsdale's Freedom Quest Fund, a 150th anniversary capital and endowment campaign to raise \$151 million by 1994. In his latest book, *One By One: Preserving Values and Freedom in Heartland America*, Roche describes Hillsdale's battle against tomorrow's enemies of the moral order such as "the Greens instead of the Reds" and the "New Agers" who attack "what is normal and morally healthy in favor of things everyone has always regarded as perverse." Hillsdale's promotional videotape, "Ideas Have Consequences," features endorsements from political luminaries Jeane Kirkpatrick and William F. Buckley Jr., and the college's board of trustees includes Jeffrey Coors and James Quayle (Dan's dad). Even Ronald Reagan agrees that "Hillsdale deserves the appreciation of all who labor for freedom."

### Doctor who?

Global concern about the toxicity of pesticides could be just a lot of hype, chirps the newsletter of the Washington Poison Network. Last year, the Washington legislature passed the Pesticide Incident Reporting and Tracking (PIRT) project, charging state agencies with investigating and reporting the outcomes of pesticide-related accidents or illnesses. On the subject of physicians' responsibilities concerning PIRT, the network's medical director writes: "Remember... society's concern about synthetic pesticides may be somewhat out of proportion for many reasons, including 'media hype'... To date, no objective evidence of any physical consequences whatsoever have been detected pursuant to the Love Canal fiasco, and the dioxins are turning out to be far less toxic than predicted—if they are toxic at all. Nonetheless, try to be prepared."

Please send timely news about local activities, follow-ups on stories we've run or other interesting bits of information—including your address and phone number—to Kira Jones, In These Times, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.



### Legendary Burma drug lord tough to bump

CHIANG MAI PROVINCE, THAILAND—Khun Sa, otherwise known as the Prince of Death, who controls 60 percent of the opium and heroin traffic in the Golden Triangle from his tiny kingdom in Burma's Shan state, is looking for a few new friends.

Recently, the legendary drug lord has been under attack on all fronts. The Thai army has destroyed several of his "jungle kitchens" used to cook heroin. His war with the rival Wa state army has intensified in Shan state. A New York court has indicted him on drug-trafficking charges. Agents for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) would love to get their mitts on him. And now, after years of cooperating with an unsavory Burmese regime, Khun Sa is rumored to be at the top of its hit list.

If the latter is true, some observers say, it would be only as a sop to Western media to improve the international image of Burma, now known as Myanmar. Meanwhile, the financially strapped country—not wishing to give up its lucrative drug trade—is already reported to have groomed an heir apparent, Lo Hsing Han, another longtime trafficker.

But if you think this has put a dent in Khun Sa's nefarious operations, think again. In a recent *Bangkok Post* interview from his tidy mountain headquarters barely 10 kilometers from the Thai border, Khun Sa (a.k.a. Chiang Chi Fu) laughed when a reporter asked about the recent attacks. "These are only stories for the newspapers so people will think something is being done about narcotics," he said.

But Khun Sa appears to have taken the attacks seriously enough to surround himself with six heavily armed

body guards. And recently he's allowed a select number of reporters to make the arduous 12-hour mule ride to his not-so-secret village encampment so he can tell his story.

Reporters complain, however, that he never answers questions about his involvement with narcotics, preferring to talk at length about his longstanding offer to the U.S. to clean up drug trafficking in the Golden Triangle. Since 1976, Khun Sa has said he would eliminate opium in Shan state within seven years for a cool \$300 million. So far, no takers.

The Golden Triangle is a vast area—about 150,000 square miles—encompassing verdant hills and rugged mountainous terrain stretching from Burma's northern Kachin state east through Laos to the Vietnamese border and south to Thailand's northwestern provincial capital of Chiang-mai.

It is high in these remote mountains that various tribal groups—the Hmong, Meo Lisu, Lahu and Akha, among others—have traditionally grown the opium poppy. During harvest season, each bulb is scarred by hand with a small curved knife, releasing a milky sap that dries and turns brown. The opium is then ready to be processed into heroin.

Burma leads the region in production by far with an estimated 2,500 tons of opium last year. Laos produced 600 to 700 tons, mostly in the eastern provinces, while Thailand managed a modest 30 tons. Compared to the '60s regional total of 1,000 tons, it's not difficult to see how the Golden Triangle got its name.

Khun Sa, along with an officer elite comprised of former Kuomintang soldiers, commands a force of nearly 20,000 young Shan and Chinese Haw soldiers and a militia of 5,000. They claim to be revolutionaries, not opium traffickers, fighting to liberate Shan state from an oppressive Bur-

mese government. They boast of a constitution modeled after that of the U.S. and claim more than 2 million followers among Shan state's 8 million people.

"Heroin production is not my business," Khun Sa was reported as saying. But he does admit to taxing traders who ship high-quality heroin—almost 99 percent pure—through his territory.

He says the taxes are used to finance revolutionary activities, build schools and health centers and assist poor Shan farmers. "The DEA will never be able to stop the narcotics traffic," said one of Khun Sa's lieutenants, "not in a hundred years."

Some in Washington, D.C., agree. A congressional subcommittee on narcotics control has been debating the effectiveness of the DEA approach. As the argument goes, what good does it do to get rid of drug kingpin Khun Sa when there will always be someone to take his place?

Critics of the DEA say that more effort should be made to nab the "big guys" who make millions controlling the drug trade while living "respectable" lives in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Marseille and New York. "It should be kept in mind," said Bertil Lintner, a journalist who has followed Burmese politics and narcotics questions for 12 years, "the farmers who grow opium make no money. It's the international dealers who get the richest."

Meanwhile, Khun Sa is protecting his back. He reportedly has taken out a life-insurance policy with a unique difference. He's included with it a list of names of all the individuals he has dealt with over the years and has threatened to expose them if he were to suffer any harm. Prior planning has always been one of Khun Sa's strong suits, which helps to explain why the Golden Triangle is still golden.

—Tony Gillotte



# Brazil votes not to defend the rainforest

By Ken Silverstein

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

**T**HE FINAL BALLOTS HAVE JUST BEEN COUNTED from Brazil's October 3 congressional and gubernatorial elections, and the general consensus is that conservatives are the big winners. So far, no one seems to have noticed that among the biggest losers were the Amazon rainforest and its defenders.

Right-wing candidates ran strong nationwide in the first elections since conservative Fernando Collor de Mello edged out socialist Luis Inacio Lula da Silva in last December's presidential race. Collor, the first freely elected president in almost three decades, replaced civilian Jose Sarney, who came to power following an electoral college vote strongly influenced by the 1964-85 military dictatorship. Sarney allowed the military to retain almost complete control of Amazon policy, and little progress toward preserving the remaining rainforest was made during his tenure.

It was during the military's reign that wide-scale destruction of the Amazon began, as the generals set out to open up the region to large multinational and domestic business interests. Thousands of miles of roads were built, and billions of dollars in fiscal incentives and subsidies were doled out to private investors.

Especially favored by the dictatorship were ranching projects designed to turn the region into a huge beef exporter. That dream ended in failure—the Amazon basin still must import beef to meet local needs—while the rainforest was set ablaze to clear land for grazing. Mining and logging companies also cut huge swathes through the forest, and speculation fueled by soaring land prices led to violence against poor peasant farmers by wealthy newcomers.

**Blackened greens:** Rightist politics have long dominated the Amazon region, one of the poorest and most isolated in all Brazil. Their success is largely based on the support of major landowners who have long controlled the votes of the rural poor.

Traditionally, conservatives used straightforward methods to win their way into office: on election day, half of a bank note or one shoe would be delivered to voters. The other half was turned over if ballot-box results proved favorable. While payoff techniques have generally become more sophisticated, goods and services are still routinely swapped in exchange for political support.

"Almost all the region's new elected officials are totally opposed to ecological concerns and rational development," says Fernando Gabiera, president of Brazil's small Green Party, who termed the election results "a disaster" for the rainforest. Slash-and-burn techniques used by ranchers and farmers have already destroyed about 6 percent of the 2 million-square-mile wilderness. The swath of blackened land is roughly equal in size to the state of California.

Prospects for protection of the Amazon have only slightly improved since the generals stepped down. This was evident in the October vote, in which all 27 governorships, 31 chairs in the 81-seat senate and all 503 spots in the lower congress were up for grabs. Anti-ecology conservatives showed overwhelming strength in the nine states of the "Legal Amazon," where they won outright victories in three gubernatorial races and

were headed to November 25 runoffs in the other six. Only in the two small states of Acre and Amapa, where candidates from the socialist Workers Party (PT) won spots in runoffs, do pro-environmentalists have even a shot at winning office. (See accompanying story.) Rightists also swept Amazon congressional races, winning at least 12 of the 13 senate chairs up for grabs and all but a handful of house seats.

**Paradise lost:** Many of the region's voters view the efforts of environmentalists as an attempt to turn the rainforest into a live Disneyland, blocking economic growth and locking the region into perennial backwardness. A recent report of the major Rio daily *Jornal do Brasil* points out the great difference between the "real Amazon" and the Amazon of many First World environmentalists, who tend to see the region as a sort of Paradise Lost that must be fully preserved.

Overlooked has been the region's widespread poverty, which helps account for a male life expectancy of 42 years. "The level of perception of the Amazon's people is still tied exclusively to survival ... and will remain that way until the fish [and other resources] really begin to disappear," Roberto Viera, president of the Brazilian Institute of Law and Environmental Policy, told the newspaper. "For now, the fires in the Amazon still haven't reached people's backyards."

Gilberto Mestrinho, the new governor of Amazonas, Brazil's largest state, has perhaps the most rabidly anti-ecological views of October's electoral winners. A supporter of large-scale development projects, Mestrinho holds the original—and thoroughly outrageous—view that the Amazon is self-destructing and should be leveled forthwith, before nature itself does the job. "The center of ecology is man, and I will be the governor of men and not of the forest and animals," he repeatedly told crowds on the campaign trail.

Amazonas' new senator, Amazonino Men-

des, is another anti-ecology extremist. He once proposed handing out chain saws to settlers to speed the felling of the forest.

In the neighboring state of Roraima, both gubernatorial finalists have openly opposed the federal government's announced plans to remove thousands of miners from the territory of the Yanomami Indians, the world's largest remaining primitive tribe. Imported diseases and armed clashes with the miners, who illegally search for gold, diamonds and other minerals on Yanomami land, have killed

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some 1,500 of the tribe's remaining 9,000 members in the past three years.

The favorite in Roraima is Romero Juca, presently on trial for illegally authorizing logging on native land between 1986 and 1988, when he headed the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). Juca, who has been accused of flagrant corruption, also allowed miners to overrun indigenous territory during his tenure at the foundation. The miners have dumped an estimated 600 tons of mercury—used in gold prospecting—into the

Tapajos River, one of the Amazon's largest waterways.

Juca's opponent in the runoff, Otomar Pinto, is a former military man who has also demonstrated no interest in environmental or native problems. "The elections in Roraima could spell the end for the Yanomami," says

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political scientist David Fleischer of the University of Brasilia.

Equally disturbing is the situation in the huge state of Para, which has one of the region's highest rates of deforestation and has been the site of repeated clashes between miners and several major Indian tribes. Para's runoff opponents, Jader Barbalho and Sahid Xerfan, are bitter foes, responsible for perhaps the country's dirtiest first-round campaign. The antipathy is purely personal—both candidates are traditional populists. "We have no preference in Para," says Green Party leader Gabeira. "Neither possible winner will defend the Indians or the Amazon."

**Bloody harvest:** A final concern is that most of the newly elected officials are supported by the large landowners who are responsible for most prior destruction of the rainforest. Major farmers are also behind the violence that has plagued the region in the past decade, when over a thousand peasants were murdered in land conflicts.

The bloodiest battles have been waged in the "Parrot's Beak" area of the southeast Amazon, where the Maranhão, Tocantins and Para states meet. Ricardo Resende, a priest who works in the region with the Catholic Church-linked Pastoral Land Commission, says the region's new officeholders have "never demonstrated any interest in protecting the region's poor" and will continue to expell peasant farmers from their land. Though the Parrot's Beak has been relatively quiet in the past year, Resende fears an upturn in violence; drought in the neighboring northeast and increased unemployment in

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## Brazil's left: in the anti-capitalist dark and on the defensive

While the Workers Party (PT), the main radical opposition group, appears to have doubled its congressional seats to about 35, its overall results were disappointing. After PT presidential candidate Luis Inacio da Silva—known as "Lula"—won 31 million votes last December, party leaders hoped to elect 50 members to congress. Even worse, the PT's gubernatorial candidates did badly in almost all major states. In São Paulo, where the party was born a decade ago after a series of huge labor strikes led by Lula rocked the dictatorship, the PT's Plinio Arruda Sampaio finished a poor fourth.

The Democratic Labor Party (PDT) emerged from the elections in a slightly stronger position. Led by populist Leonel Brizola, one of two governors to send out state militias to oppose the 1964 coup, the PDT upped its number of congressional seats from 38 to about 50. Brizola himself romped to a first-round win in Rio de Janeiro, and the party has a shot at at least three more governorships in November's runoffs.

Overall, the left's bank in congress grew from 72 to about 100, where it will have a solid but clearly minority position. Socialists have, in fact, been on the defensive

in Brazil. They have largely failed to present alternatives to Collor's policies, and widespread complaints about economic austerity measures have not been channeled into political opposition. The most obvious example of the left's disorganization is the near-complete inertia of the "parallel government," set up by the PT early this year to "monitor" the Collor administration and present alternative policy options to those decreed by the government. Now, almost nine months after the new president's inauguration, the parallel government has yet to release an economic program.

That failure results from a number of factors, the most obvious one being that faced by the left in many parts of the world: the need to construct an anti-capitalist alternative in the midst of the collapse of communism.

While the PT never backed the Stalinist regimes of Eastern Europe, it has suffered from the aftershocks of their fall. As one observer recently wrote in explaining the party's disappointing electoral performance, the PT has been unable to "present a coherent vision of the world or, more immediately, an alternative to the Collor Plan."

With the left in disarray and voting mandatory, casting blank ballots was the most popular form of protest in October. Such ballots totaled as high as 50 percent in some states and averaged about 35 percent, an all-time record. The figures showed a frustration with the severe economic problems that accompanied the return of civilian rule in 1985, says University of Brasilia political scientist David Fleischer. "You vote and vote and vote, and nothing changes. Prices are still high, and salaries are still low."

These trends are likely to continue, at least for the short term. Inflation shows no signs of quickly ceding, and recession is spreading throughout the economy. Most economists say Brazil is following in the footsteps of other Latin American countries that have embarked on International Monetary Fund-style "shock" plans to control high inflation; a slow battle to bring down the cost of living and an extended period of economic stagnation. For the PT and other leftist parties, criticizing Collor is not enough.

During the next few years, they must show voters they know what to do with power.

-K.S.