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# SYNAPSES MESSAGES

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“Racism and the struggle against it are the keys both to what is wrong with our society and what can be done to change it. Since the country was built on racism—its wealth originally acquired, through slavery and the slave trade—it really could not be otherwise.” Anne Braden

## UNDOING RACISM: AMERICA'S PERESTROIKA

As the 1980's ended, something broke loose. The momentous global events now swirl around us—particularly in Eastern Europe—and we dare to hope that something new is possible in the U.S.A. too. Gorbachev understood that he couldn't effect Perestroika (economic restructuring) in the USSR by subsidizing Eastern Europe or fighting in Afghanistan. To make necessary changes inside the country, he needs the cooperation of Soviet citizens. Citizens are more willing to cooperate when they have freedom to participate in a process that is not rigged from the beginning. Hence, Glasnost.

Part of the loosening element was Gorbachev's practical appraisal of the problems facing the Soviet Union and a willingness to imagine using new ways to resolve the problems. In the United States, racism deeply embedded in our national fabric and psyche keeps us from viewing our problems objectively. Thus effective solutions elude us. Continuing to imprison people of color and to invade small defenseless countries where people of color reside has not halted the US economic decline.

According to reports, the KGB and the Soviet military realized ten years ago that their economy was in shambles and needed a radical restructuring. Some say Gorbachev has managed to stay in power, while pushing a new agenda on unwilling bureaucrats because he has KGB and military support.

Imagine if the Pentagon and CIA concluded that the crime, homelessness and substance abuse cri-

sis in the US is the result of spiritual poverty (worship at the altars of commercial greed) and unequal distribution of resources. Imagine if the Pentagon decided a first step would be to shift the current available money (our taxes, unequally collected as they are) from military spending to health, social services, education for all.

Imagine if the US government decided to pay reparations to African Americans whose uncompensated labor helped build the wealth of this nation and who endured hundreds of years of slavery, lynchings and unequal treatment before the law. There is precedent for reparations—for example, the recent agreement to pay Japanese Americans interned during World War II. Glasnost (openness) would be imperative for the dominant white population to understand and support some form of reparations.

Rev. C.T. Vivian, an aide to Martin Luther King, Jr. in the 1960's said a few years ago, “A person really does have to repent of sins to be saved. And that's true of a nation, too. What happened in the 1960's was that this entire country took just a few steps toward admitting it had been wrong on race, and the result was an explosion of creativity and humanity in all directions. We moved temporarily toward becoming a more humane society for everyone.”

Inspired by changes elsewhere in the world, we want to be open to the 1990's as the decade for more “explosions of creativity and humanity”. At Synapses, we are feeling an urgency about the work of undoing

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racism. We see that the path which can lead away from deathly economic disparities (internationally and domestically) and interventions in the Third World cannot avoid confrontation with racism in the US. We are starting, of course, with ourselves.

In the next years, as we learn through doing, we hope to make available to Messages readers—workshop, print and video resources, action suggestions and insights. We welcome experiences, advice, counsel and comments from synaptic people around the world.

## **B**uilding Hate Free Zones

*Dee D. Smith Simmons is a Synapses friend and founder of RESPECT, a Southwest Chicago organization for promoting racial harmony. What follows are excerpts from Ms. Simmons' keynote speech given at Marquette Park Family and Freedom Fest in August, 1988, with Chicago police surrounding the fest to protect us from rampaging skinheads and Klansmen in full attire. RESPECT, P.O. Box 21050, Chicago 60621.*

**Just as we have nuclear free zones, we must establish hate free zones.**

Racism is a bottle baby and what you do with bottle babies is wean them. Nursing gives them a sense of security, they like the benefits and want to continue. But, mom knows best and women of all races, creeds and colors know best about finding the solution to racism because it's the same solution for sexism.

Working on mutual respect is the biggest part of the solution. The other part: don't throw eggs or insults at others, don't teach your children to throw eggs or insults at others because of their race, creed, color, physical handicap or sex. Time does one thing...provides a proper incubator for bigotry and hatred to infect an unborn generation. No more time...the bottle baby, racism, must be weaned. America does not need time to end racism...we need action, direct and affirmative.

## **A** Challenge to White North Americans

*This challenge from Anthony Brown, assistant director of the Counselling Center University of Washington in Seattle is taken from a longer article with permission from InSearch, a national newsletter for Mennonite students and young adults.*

There is an increasing need for white North Ameri-

cans to own their racism and to conquer their racial fears. No longer should minorities of color have major responsibility for combating racism or for articulating how they have been affected by being colored in a white society. These are the times when whites must confront other whites and, in so doing, claim more responsibility for this issue. Journal articles, books, and newsletters which seek to address the issue of racism must include white writers who openly accept their status as preferred citizens and who openly call other whites to the importance of valuing diversity. Any other attempts to deal with this issue run the risk of appearing token.

A new orientation must be articulated which sees the importance of examining the roots and causes of racism. The control-dominance approach in relationships must shift to appreciating interdependent ways of relating. Differences in race and ethnicity must be viewed as opportunities for enrichment where everyone has something to gain.

## **W**hat Can We Learn from the Sixties' for Undoing Racism in the 90's.

*These comments by Anne Braden, co-chair, Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice are reprinted from Guardian, July 5, 1989.*

I think the most important thing to understand about the '60s is that it was the civil rights movement that created that decade. That—the upsurge of Blacks, followed by heightened action among other people of color, and finally joined by many whites—was what broke the pall of the so-called “Silent '50s”, shook the nation to its roots, and set us briefly on a different national course.

An important message of the '60s was that just plain people—without money, prestige, or power, people in some cases who had never had a chance to do anything but pick cotton—really did come together, organize, and evolve into political leaders. And they changed the policies of the nation.

An often-ignored message of the 60's is that many, many white people, under the impact of the African-American movement, really did break with the patterns of 400 years of history and aligned themselves, four-square, with the movement against racism. So much depends on the ongoing, now intensified, struggle for the hearts and minds of white people in our nation. If we in the progres-



sive movement lose that battle, we will move toward fascism. If we win it, we'll move toward a better future.

## **V**oices from the Westside of Chicago

*At a recent meeting of the Interfaith Organizing Project (IOP), a community group dedicated to human and economic development, members responded to the question, "What do you think is the most important way to undo racism?"*

Ms. Mollie Calhoun—"Really speak to each other as human beings, as sisters, mothers, friends. I worked as a housekeeper—you work in their homes, you cook their food, you raise their kids, and yet you're not good enough for them. What is more personal than your food, your home, your children? We blacks are more accepting."

Ms. Mabel Manning, "Mayor" of the West Side—"Associate with other people, you find out you're alike. You have problems, they have problems."

Ms. Wilma Ward—"Education. People are racist out of pure ignorance of each other and themselves. People compete—those moving up tend to push others back. Don't look at who's coming behind, but what is here already. Expand what is here, make more jobs. Racism is built on idea of white supremacy. People don't love themselves, so they cannot love others. Our only hope is to educate the children."

Mr. Earnest Gates—"Shift priorities from materialism to socialism/humanism."

## **N**amibian Reminders of US Racism

*Dr. Gerald Horne, lawyer, journalist and university professor visited Synapses in 1987 after completing a fact finding mission on human rights in the Philippines which Synapses helped to organize. Recently the World Peace Council sent Dr. Horne on a fact finding mission to Namibia on the eve of the national election in November. In addition to political and economic analysis, Dr. Horne made some pungent social observations.*

For a Black American journalist who grew up in Jim Crow, Missouri, there are reminders of home ever present in Windhoek, Namibia's capital.

In both countries interracial social relationships are frowned on by the racists. According to a leading white member of SWAPO, black males and white females seen walking hand in hand in the streets are subject to harass-

ment. On the other hand, the same occurrence between Black females and white males is not viewed as distastefully. Courting a Black woman is seen as "exotic", particularly by recent European immigrants. Just as in the US, racism is mixed with male supremacy.

There are three distinct neighborhoods in Namibia's capital, divided by race and separated by highways. Katatura is for Blacks and is the most decrepit. Khomosal is for "colored" and a cut above Katatura in appearance. Finally, there is a white Windhoek, the most attractive of them all.

This, too, is little different from the US. In Los Angeles there is Watts, which is predominantly Black; East L.A. mostly Chicano-Latino; and areas like Beverly Hills, which is overwhelmingly white. In the US, this kind of stratification is by the dollar and informal racism, not directly sanctioned by law. It is to this kind of "civilized" approach that Washington has tried to nudge Pretoria, thus far to no avail.

## **F**rom Ciskei: Keep Up the Pressure

*In the Sept/89 Messages we reported on Synapses' members' Christopher and Anne-Margaret Geerdts' detention by Ciskei (South African homeland) police. They have since received the proper papers for working in Ciskei. What follows is an excerpt from a recent letter.*

Overall, there is a definite feeling that change is in the air, but there is still a long way to go. South Africa must be wrested from white grip, and that is a long way off. One has to speak to only a few average whites to realize how deeply racist they are, and how much resistance there is to any change. In their wildest dreams they could not imagine that "they" (Blacks) could possibly share suburbs and amenities. This means we must keep up the pressure. We must not slacken and wait to see what will happen, but act so that things will happen. Recent events are not change, but only new opportunities to bring about changes. They are not a cause to rest, but a cause to intensify our efforts.





# RESPONSES TO THE PHILIPPINE COUP

## A Filipino-American View

*Epifanio San Juan Jr. from the University of Connecticut in Storrs is an author, professor and long time activist in the US.*

Newsweek (11 December) reports what everybody now knows: "Inside (Malacanang), Corazon Aquino was on the telephone to the US Embassy: without American military muscle, she told Ambassador Nicholas Platt, her government would not survive." Chief of Staff, General Ramos in fact wanted more: intervention by US Marines. Whatever happened to people power?

Cory Aquino has only herself to blame. She turned against the millions of Filipinos who, since 1972, had struggled hard (thousands sacrificed their lives, including her husband Ninoy) to put her in power. Barely a year into her rule, she placed her whole trust on the military—the very same soldiers who are now demanding her resignation—and declared total war on all dissidents (stigmatized as "communists"). She has unleashed the brutal vigilantes on thousands of civilians. Now she's reaping the whirlwind.

The now confirmed subservience of the Aquino regime to the US corporate world will surely be climaxed with the prolongation of the tenure of US military bases. Those bases are now her chief guarantee of remaining in power.

Does the head of the Republic who sold her country down the river to an imperial power, still merit the respect of Filipinos? Despite our inherited poverty and subaltern passivity, endemic to a neocolony, we Filipinos still believe in self-respect, our integrity as a nation, and we still value our inalienable if much compromised independence.

## An American View

*The Friends of the Filipino People, established in 1973 is a national organization of American activists. What follows is a portion of their statement about the recent coup attempt in the Philippines.*

It seems doubtful that the latest coup attempt could have been planned and implemented on the scale it was

without the knowledge of certain US military officials, the CIA, and embassy personnel. For the past several months, US Ambassador Nicholas Platt has been pressuring the Aquino government to hold a referendum on the future of the bases, despite a Philippine constitution which calls for a nuclear-free country. When the Philippine House tried to oblige by calling for a national "consultation", the Senate defeated the bill.

The US has done and will attempt to do whatever its policy makers deem necessary to keep the bases, regardless of the consequences for Philippine sovereignty. The military aid provided by the US to the Philippine military has helped support a vigilante army that makes war on the poor and stifles dissent, including those who oppose the bases.



## Update from Bukidon: Who Dispositioned the Bullets?

Many of you sent letters to Winchester Western Division about the use of their military ammunition caliber 5.56 against farmers in Bukidnon struggling to protect the forests from destruction. (November Messages) Synapses member Carol Lagrasse from Stony Creek, New York received a reply from C.E. (Bob) Becker.

Mr. Becker wrote, "... We did produce under contract with our U.S. government, quantities of 5.56 military ammunition for use by our U.S. government. . . . This ammunition which was the property of the U.S. government precludes Winchester from having any responsibility for how it is dispositioned. Let me assure you that Winchester does not produce and market ammunition to be channeled for purposes other than sport hunting and for specific military purposes which are controlled by the U.S. government. . . . I hope I have clarified to your satisfaction how this ammunition apparently got dispositioned into the wrong hands in the Philippines."

Who is responsible for the deaths and destruction in Bukidnon?

- Olin Corporation, the ammunition manufacturer
- the U.S. government, the ammunition purchaser and adviser of Philippine military
- the Philippine military and para-military, the ammunition user



- the American tax-payers, the ammunition financiers

More importantly, who will put a stop to the death and destruction ?

- the Bukidnon farmers and churchworkers who struggle

- fact-finding missions who tell their story

- US residents who raise questions/apply pressure

Can the C.E. Beckers, Defense Secretaries Dick Cheney (US) and Fidel Ramos (Philippines) and the rest of the cast of characters be won over ? Not with one letter—but perhaps with many letters, many visits, creative presentations to touch the heart and soul—persistence and resistance.

## Sudan

*Steve Anderson, recently returned from eight years in Sudan spent a month at Synapses and alerted us to the situation in Sudan.*

### Background

At Sudan's independence in 1956 the British turned over the country to a government controlled by an Arab minority. Since then, there has been tension as the black majority (composed of Christians, Animists, Muslims) experienced economic, political, and religious discrimination and oppression. In 1983, full scale civil war broke out when the Arab president (that the US continued backing with over \$200 million in military aid per year) broke the main components of an 11 year old peace agreement.

In 1989, the US stopped military aid and started sending humanitarian aid to civilians on both sides of the civil war. This not only reduced hunger but also led to an unprecedented seven month cease-fire. The policy transformation was led by the bipartisan Select Committee on Hunger chaired by the late Rep. Mickey Leland who gave his life last August in an effort to implement the program.

### Current Crisis

However, now the US is considering renewing its military support to the President General Omar Hassan Bashir (who took over an elected government six months ago by a military coup) despite his terrible record. General Bashir has:

## ACTION OPPORTUNITY

1) Write the State Department to oppose a presidential waiver of Amendment 513 of the Foreign Assistance Act, which would allow military aid to go to Sudan without the approval of congress.

2) Write your congresspersons to make sure the new budget debated in January has emergency food and medical aid and not military aid.

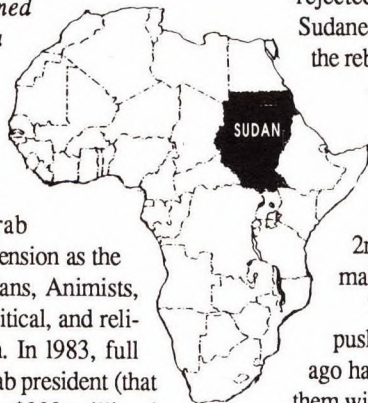
-stated he will direct a higher percentage of the country's resources to the military and has introduced conscription.

-arrested over 300 politicians, administrators, and trade union leaders and is detaining them without charge.

-rejected three former peace proposals that other Sudanese Northern Arab parties have signed with the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA).

-recommended a "solution" to the war in his superficial "National Dialogue for Peace" held this fall that includes the imposition of Sharia Law. These Islamic laws, which make all women and non-Muslims 2nd and 3rd class citizens, were one of the main reasons the war started.

The Sudanese government would have been pushed to serious and genuine negotiation long ago had the international community not sustained them with billions of dollars in military and economic aid.



## Sing-out Against Shell

(To the tune of "Let it Snow").

"Oh, the weather in South Africa's delightful, / But apartheid life is frightful, / So together we join to sing: / Boycott Shell, Boycott Shell, Boycott Shell."

On a cold Chicago day our "choir" gathered at the South African Consulate to observe Human Rights Day by calling attention the way in which Shell Oil assists the apartheid system. Since South Africa has no oil of its own, the military and police depend on oil from companies like Shell to fuel their machinery.

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# SPECIAL REPORT:

## An Eye-Witness's Reflection on the Recent Coup D'Etat Attempt in the Philippines

*This special insert features the observations and reflections of a Filipina Synapses member who lives and works in Manila, a few miles from Malacanang, the presidential palace.*

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The phone rang at 4:30 a.m. December 1. A neighbor was telling us not to report to work because a coup d'etat was taking place.

Before the coup, transport networks planned to strike that same day because Cory had announced gasoline price increases the day before. The transport strike would be followed by a Welgang Bayan (general strike) of workers, public school teachers and government employees. The groups organizing the general strike predicted the paralyzing of Manila. I was looking forward to another people's power. Now the COUP! How could those people steal this historic moment from us???

There had been growing discontent the past few months. Public school teachers, receiving below poverty line pay just returned to work after a week's walk out from classes, the second since classes began in June. The electric power shortage has also tried people's patience. For a month, power supplies in Luzon have been rationed daily. Electricity goes off for about two to three hours at least twice a day. Traffic stands still. Shops close. Electric appliances break down. Food spoils. Offices and factories stop work (and workers' salary gets deducted). Unable to keep up with the high cost of maintenance, three big bus companies stopped operation recently. Unrepaired roads contribute to high costs as well. The population of Manila grows as economic hardships and militarization in the countryside drive more people to the city.

At about 6:30 we heard airplanes. Two tora-tora planes were circling Malacanang Palace, the president's office and residence. Soon, I heard bombings. Cory is not going to make it this time. We're going to have a military junta.

Initially I had mixed feelings, fearing a military junta. On the other hand, I had difficulty identifying with the Aquino government's failure to take up the cause of the poor. By giving priority to the wealthy sector and foreigners, her government has continued to implement Marcos' oppressive and exploitative policies.

When more bombings took place at noon and civilian casualties got reported, my feelings turned to anger. I began to see a no-win situation for the people. I also felt so sad for lives wasted. Later in the afternoon, I heard U.S. Phantom F-4 jets. The sound was horrifying. I screamed and covered my ears. I cried in anger. "U.S. intervention. This is enough."

I was told how children cried without stop at the sound of helicopters. At least three elderly died of heart attacks from the sounds of the bombings.

On several occasions, the jets mistargeted. Four government soldiers were blasted into pieces by F-4 bombings. Civilians lay dead and wounded in the street.

The area around the military camps is a populated residential place, the largest portion occupied by poor squatters and the other section a wealthy subdivision. While both were victims of bombings, the poor in the vicinity had very limited means of evacuating, so many of them fled the fighting in panic and were injured in the process. The wealthier families had cars, helpers, drivers and rich relatives at their disposal. Only about one third of the casualties were soldiers. (80 dead and still dying and more than 500 injured.) What struck me in all these bombings was their reluctance to drop bombs on the residences of the wealthy, but not the poor. The picture of militarization in the countryside gets clearer.

In these three days, I've seen houses burned and roofs smashed and blown meters away. I've seen how bombs crush concrete structures and pavement. How howitzers blast fire. A whole place so full of smoke after a bombardment one could hardly see. How the ground vibrates when missiles and bombs explode.

I've also seen how war weapons kill - a head immediately cut from a man's body - bazookas blast three passersby, scattering pieces of their bodies meters away - shrapnel crushes bodies - severed hands, legs, feet and fingers. Who invented these efficient weapons for killing and destroying property?

But where were the people? What happened to "people's power"?

Most of the people were hesitant to go out. Like myself, they had mixed feelings. Apparently they did not care who wins the war. What difference does it make? Some even welcomed the idea of a "military junta". Who knows, it may turn out better than the present government. In the 1986 EDSA revolution, people went out into the street full of hope for a better society. But the situation hasn't changed since Marcos. Many have become even poorer. So why should we risk our lives now?

At the same time, it is puzzling that despite the danger, so many "osyosos" (on-lookers) came out on the streets. Like EDSA there was a sort of festive atmosphere. During lulls between shootings and bombings, people interacted with both troops. This is the first time they have seen real war. They were very curious. They asked soldiers to identify their weapons and units. War terms became a common language. "Osyosos" ignored warnings and practically put themselves in the midst of the action. When soldiers chased one another, they ran with them. They sprawled on the streets and sidewalks during crossfire. They took cover along walls when tanks attacked and they climbed rooftops to watch bombings. Like EDSA, they brought their cameras, radios, binoculars, bicycles and children with them.

A few of them got wounded, of course, but for most on-lookers the coup was like a basketball game. They named government soldiers the Anejo team and the rebels, San Miguel. Names of famous basketball teams. When U.S. F-4's came



onto the scene, people referred to them as “imports”, the name they call imported American basketball players. However, they shouted “Foul” when the U.S. intervened. That was not a fair game, they protested.

Many people felt they should do something during the coup. Evacuation centers were set up by religious and civic groups. Many also responded to the Red Cross call for blood and food donations. Cause-oriented groups formed KILOS (movement against coup d’etat) to denounce the coup attempt and ask people to support the present government. Because of their disappointment with Cory’s leadership, it was clarified that the support was not necessarily for Cory, but for ourselves and the constitutional government.



The coup d’etat is a conflict between Cory’s government and the RAM forces/Marcos loyalists. Before the people’s power in 1986, the RAM forces planned a coup against Marcos. When discovered, Enrile and his men—the RAM forces—asked for support, hence the people’s power event.

Enrile himself has established a business empire, but apparently this is not enough. He wants to take over first Marcos’ and now Cory’s government. Enrile and RAM claim that Cory’s position belongs to them. To ensure success, RAM combined forces with Marcos loyalists. This is not to mention the alleged participation of the CIA. **The bottom line of the recent coup is protection and expansion of business interests and power for Enrile and RAM.**

The past six coups pushed Cory to greater dependency on the military for survival; progressive and leftist members of her cabinet have been ousted. At the end of every coup, the military budget is increased and the soldiers’ salary is raised.

The recent coup has clarified the real beneficiary - the U.S. At the height of the coup, Cory begged for U.S. support. Without this support, it appears Cory’s government would have been crushed. This makes her government now beholden and dependent on U.S. support. **Before the coup, our government had been hinting its reluctance to retain the U.S. bases, but given her present situation of dependence, to stay in power she will need U.S. support and the bases.**

The business sector profited from the recent conflict. Because of the critical condition of the country, Cory is now forced to declare “Emergency Power”, a form of martial law which allows her to take over business establishments when national interest is at stake, forbids labor strikes at so-called vital industries and many other forms of protest. The Congress is considering giving her more power, including the power to arrest and seizure without a warrant. Once approved, we can expect military rule almost the same as Marcos’ martial law.

While the proclamation is invoked for the sake of the people—for peace and order, as well as for the development of the country, in the past, after similar proclamations, more often the people were repressed and their rights violated.

Cory still believes the people power which put her in office can keep her in office. When Cory called for people’s power, they went back to EDSA despite mixed feelings and confusion. A number were required to go by local officials who hired buses to take them there, but these were outnumbered by those who chose to go.

It appears that people were willing to give Cory’s leadership another chance, despite Cory’s shortcomings and neglect. It also shows that the people do not approve of a violent coup d’etat or military junta. Only people’s power can put the military back in the barracks where it belongs for the defense of the people NOT the protection of the elite, the business sector and politicians.

**One outcome of the coup is a strong condemnation of U.S. intervention by many, many people.** “It is an insult,” exclaimed an evacuee. “If we’re going to get killed, let it be done by Filipinos not foreigners,” remarked a resident near the camp. “I’m afraid this is the beginning of a Vietnam war. We shouldn’t allow the U.S. to come in,” protested a government soldier who had worked in Vietnam.



What options have the people got now? The revolutionary movement has not gained popular support in Manila. The last coup gave a very grim picture of an armed struggle in the city. Even if eventually the revolutionary movement gets popular support in Manila, what happens when the U.S. intervenes again with jet fighters or in the way it is intervening in El Salvador? I see a very costly and devastating scenario.

Despite its defects and limitations, the people have a better chance of democracy with the constitutional government of Cory. The ratified constitution can protect the people. Besides, RAM has nothing concrete to offer at this point and a military junta does not guarantee a democratic process.

In a conflict situation, people are caught in the crossfire. We suffer the effects of war not only in the military sense but also in concrete economic terms. The people should have a part in resolving conflict. They cannot just be on-lookers whose life is being determined by two factions. This is where people’s power should come in. This is where critical support for Cory can be the people’s leverage for a more democratic process and demands for reform.

The past few months, I’ve been visiting a large-scale peasants’ cooperative in Central Luzon. I’ve seen how this type of organizing has improved the lives of people and empowered them. I have also been organizing a labor organization in my school. We have to look at ourselves to assess what we have at the moment and work with the given reality. I am beginning to identify other possibilities. I hear church people call for ceasefire, peace zones, and people’s power. I see hope, liberation, transformation and empowerment in this process. I also see PEACE.





# The View from Germany

*Lilo Klug is a German nuclear resister who lives in Heilbronn, West Germany near a major US base with Pershing II and nuclear cruise missiles. Lilo visited the Synapses offices in April, 1989 while on a national speaking tour. In December, she wrote. "There are three different developments going on in Germany right now."*

4 (West) to 100 (East) doesn't have anything to do with the real value of the money. An East German would have to pay 50 Marks of his own money for a bus ride in the West, while in his own country, for the same ride he has to pay 0.20 Marks (East).

East German money is spent in the West by millions. While for the West, this is just business, the East German economy is bleeding to death. Western money is waiting to take over, and the condition for



## 1. The Republicans

In October we had local elections in West Germany. The results were—for the peace movement—pretty discouraging. All the established parties lost votes to a new right wing party called 'The Republicans,' which apparently, has a lot of money. Their program and their vocabulary remind us of the Nazis. "Germany First" is one of their slogans. The people who voted for them are not only old Nazis, but many poor people, refugees coming from Eastern Europe and East Germany, young men without a job or education.

## 2. "The Wall is Crumbling"

The political situation in Central Europe has completely changed within a few weeks. The West German government still doesn't recognize East German citizenship. So the people coming here are not normal refugees. They are West German citizens immediately. They get social assistance and a new passport. About 300,000 have come over and want to stay.

**In the meantime, the US military is quietly extending and consolidating its military infrastructures in West Germany.**

Unemployment in West Germany is 8%. Ironically, poor families from Southern Italy try to immigrate into the GDR (East Germany) because, in their own country, there are no jobs for them and no hope.

Our politicians should recognize East German citizenship and negotiate a realistic rate of exchange for East German money. The actual exchange rate of DM

financial help from the European Community is the "Free Market Economy." But many people who want to stay in East Germany do not want our capitalist system. They are working for a "new and better socialism". Do we intend to make Eastern Europe the "homelands" of the Common Market?

Winter is coming and it is very cold. The housing problem in West Germany is getting worse. The shelters are crowded with refugees from the East. Students are camping in tents and cars. And Mr. Kohl is doing sentimental talks about our 'brothers and sisters' from East Germany.

## 3. New Military Build Up

In the meantime, the US military is quietly extending and consolidating its military infrastructures in West Germany. They are bringing in all kinds of new, more modern weapons like helicopters, nuclear artillery shells, tactical weapons and nuclear capable fighter planes. There is no sign of disarmament and scarcely any resistance against this new military build up. All this is happening in a country stuffed with weapons on both sides of the border like no other country in the world. It makes me afraid.



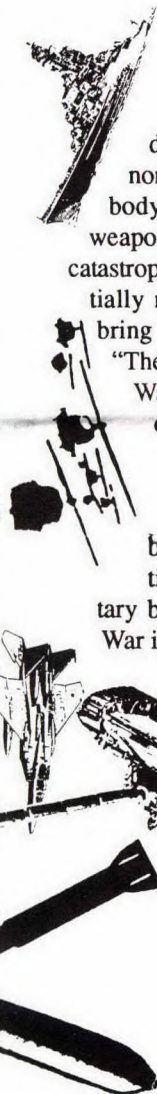



# Military Cuts: Disaster or Boon?

With the transitions made possible through the Cold War collapse, come the prospects of cutbacks in military spending, closing of bases and reductions in weapons contracts. Most people assume military spending is good for the economy and any drastic shift in policy will bring disaster.

community can result in a far stronger economic base than previously found when military contracts were in place.

For more information on economic conversion and this study by Dr. Richard Williams, write The Blueprint for Social Justice, Institute of Human Relations, Box 12, Loyola University, New Orleans, La. 70118.



However, over the last couple of decades researchers in a field called "economic conversion" have accumulated a strong body of evidence to show that reductions in weapons manufacture, for instance, may not be catastrophic at all. The conversion from an essentially military economy to a civilian one could bring with it a resurgence of prosperity as did "The Great Disarmament" of 1947 (after World War II) when our country "converted" 37% of its economic base from military to civilian production. That stimulated the incredible boom which this country experienced for the next two decades—a boom that slowed down only as the proportion of our economy dedicated to the military began to creep up again with the Vietnam War in the late 1960's.

In fact, only 34 cents of each dollar spent on military contracting go to jobs. In contrast, 51 cents of every dollar go to jobs in wholesale and retail trade and in human service industries such as education and health, 85 cents can be used to generate jobs.

The results of a recent survey of 100 US communities that had lost major military contracts indicate that a redevelopment plan giving attention to the needs of the entire

## A Glorious Day

The changes in Europe and the Soviet Union present Americans with a new picture of the world. If the slaves can act as free persons elsewhere, how long can it be before the free in the US perceive their own slavery? Ah, it will be a glorious day when millions are marching in our streets, protesting the rule of the aging patriarchy.

John Greiner, Peoria, Illinois



A question from Synapses member, Todd Rainey—What is the emotional and intellectual response of people in the Third World and their supporters to the turbulent but so far peaceful changes in Eastern Europe these days (both the political changes and the economic changes)? Readers—any responses?



## A Citizen's Campaign for Free and Fair Elections in Nicaragua

Congress has approved \$12.5 million to influence the Nicaraguan elections. This is equivalent to \$417 (in US terms) for every Nicaraguan voter to buy their vote. The allocation of these funds by Congress respects neither democratic principles nor Nicaraguan electoral law. President Bush's offer to lift the US embargo if Violeta Chamorro defeats President Ortega is another attempt to buy the Nicaraguan elections.

### ACTION OPPORTUNITY

1) Use the video "Slender Wooden Crosses, The War Continues In Nicaragua" to inform yourself and others about Nicaraguan realities. It documents contra activity in Nicaragua between April and October, 1989. Copies for loan are available in each state office of Witness for Peace (WFP). Individual copies can be purchased for \$20 from National WFP Office in Durham, N.C. (919)688-5049 or the Midwest WFP, 1821 W. Cullerton, Chicago Il 60608.

2. **Make an appointment today to visit your Senators and Congressperson.** Questions you can ask include: If the United Nations and the Organization of American States certify that the Nicaraguan elections are free and fair, will you recognize those elected as representatives of the will of the Nicaraguan people? Will you begin to treat Nicaragua as a sovereign nation (i.e., by ceasing to intervene in their internal affairs, by ceasing all support of the contras, by ceasing to block loans of the InterAmerican Development bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and by lifting the US trade embargo)?

## Good Tidings of Freedom and Choice

Chicago's elite shopping district witnessed its 4th Annual Alternative Christmas Carolling. True to form, the legal department of Water Tower Shopping Mall sent out its 3rd annual Christmas card—a Permanent Injunction Order against "demonstrating, protesting,

carolling, picketing, leafletting, handbilling, carrying banners, inhibiting the ingress and egress of persons or traffic, blocking the way of unwilling listeners, or inflicting damage to persons or property".

This year, in addition to street caroling, Synapses members, Kathy Kelly and Gene Stoltzfus joined Wellington UCC Church member, Eloise Chevrier, to sing and explain the carols on the local ABC-TV affiliate.

(To the tune of "O Little Town of Bethlehem")

Oh six El Salvadoran priests / How still we see thee lie / Above thy deep and dreamless sleep / Our congressmen walk by. / No ear could hear their protest / They voted once again / To further aid the beast they made / Arena and its friends.

(To the tune of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen")

Go rest ye young recruits who aim / To be all you can be / Your potential will not be fulfilled / in anyone's infantry / Take courage and say no to crimes / Against humanity / Oh, tidings of freedom and choice, / Freedom and choice / Oh tidings of freedom and choice.

For a complete copy of the updated, revised carols for Christmas, 1989, contact Synapses.

## Eucharist in Nicaragua

*Former Synapses board member, Fr. Grant Gallup, is in Nicaragua for a year solidifying a companion relationship between the Episcopal Diocese of Managua and Chicago. What follows are a few excerpts from his voluminous letters.*

● When I told the girl in the market that her onions cost more than they do in Chicago, she advised me to buy them in Chicago. "This," she said, "is another country."

● After the mass, at Santa Catalina de Siena south of the city, little plates of arroz valenciana and cups of cold cocoa were handed out, in memory of two young men who had died in the struggle against the contra, and whose mother was here to keep their memory



alive with this mass. Father Alvaro has attracted people to this church by encouraging the families who have lost members in the struggle to bring their memories to the Eucharist.

Any religion that does not ultimately issue in politics is



magic and superstition, for it is in the realm of the polis that the kingdom comes, and every Eucharist, as Archbishop Ruben Izaza wrote years ago, is a political act. Only those who are ready to begin the march to liberation have any right (or for that matter, any need) to eat the passover, which is a bread of haste, food for the exodus.

● Last evening we listened to an English news broadcast from Winnipeg, which played tapes of the interruption of George Bush's speech in Chicago by peace people—the event sounded wonderfully exciting.



The war here in Central America must be “brought home” more and more, as was the US war on Vietnam. Nothing can really change in Central America until there are profound changes in Gringolandia.



## Elections in Guatemala

*Synapses member, Pete Begly, is a volunteer church worker in Guatemala. He writes from the outskirts of Guatemala City.*

There are soldiers in the streets and the National Police look as if they are on combat patrols. I even saw soldiers (off duty) shopping in a supermarket in Guatemala City casually choosing their fruit with one hand and holding their assault rifles with the other! Despite the fact that there is a civilian president, the military and the wealthy business people and landowners are the real power in the country.

The campaign for the presidential elections is beginning. Many of you may remember Rios Montt, the general who overthrew Gen. Lucas Garcia in 1982. Under these two military dictators the army killed tens

of thousands of people and admitted to destroying 440 villages (mostly indigenous). Well, Rios Montt is back and running for president.

On the other end of the political field is Fr. Andre Giron who organized landless peasants during the 80's to demand a more equal distribution of land (70-80% of the land is owned by about 2% of the people). The army will never permit a “communist” like Fr. Giron to be president. (It should be remembered that the “communist” government of Jacobo Arbenz that was overthrown by the CIA in 1954 was in reality a New Deal-style government very enamored with FDR.)

## God (RE)sides with the Poor ?

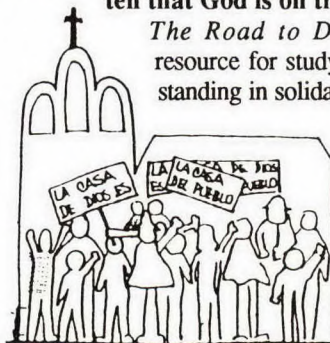
*Synapses member David Hayden, recently defrocked by the Mennonite Church, will spend the winter living on the streets of Washington, D.C. as part of a national campaign to end homelessness through the creation of decent affordable housing. The Virginia Conference of the Mennonites accused Hayden of using profanity, violence and of promoting Malcolm X. Hayden said the conflict was part of the cosmic struggle of the rich against the poor.*

*The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion*, a new document issued by representatives from Christians in South Africa, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, South Korea, Namibia and the Philippines, is a strong call to conversion of First World Christians.

The 28 page document signed by thousands of church people in the seven countries, issues a strong and clear call to those of us in the First World to name, expose, and call to conversion those in our churches who embrace the sins of idolatry, heresy, apostasy, hypocrisy and blasphemy **because they have forgotten that God is on the side of the poor.**

*The Road to Damascus*, a useful resource for study groups interested in standing in solidarity with Third World

Christians, can be ordered for \$3.50 from the Center of Concern, 3700 13th St. NE, Washington, DC 20017 (202-635-2757).





"Sing-out" continued.

Often anti-apartheid protests at the consulate include placards, bullhorns and chants. The somewhat melodious strains wafting down Michigan Avenue seemed to catch shoppers off guard. They stopped, many smiled and most accepted our flyer explaining how Shell Oil fuels apartheid.

The outdoor caroling was just one event in the ongoing Shell Boycott Campaign which began in South Africa. For more information on **Shell Free Zones**, **Shell Discredit Cards**, or all seven verses of the Synapses adapted version of "Let it Snow" contact Joan Gerig at **Synapses**.



## Burma: The Struggle Continues

The Burmese young people continue their struggle for democracy and freedom from their base on the Thai-Burmese border. To receive their informative, challenging, well written newsletter, write "DAWN" P.O. Box 1352, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.

If you are interested in the environmental crisis in Burma, want information and action for Earth Day (April) or want to support the movement for democracy in Burma through action in the United States or Canada, contact Don Erickson, c/o Synapses, 1821 W. Cullerton, Chicago 60608. 312-421-5513 or FAX 312-421-5762.

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## AXON RESPONSES

otherwise known as letters to the editor

We really have to deal with feelings of frustration at the way many of our acquaintances refuse to concern themselves about the powerless and oppressed peoples of the earth. It is so much easier to blame communists, homosexuals and abortion and then go vote the Republican ticket.

**Walter Epp, Marion, S.D.**

The article, "Chemical/Biological Warfare" (November issue) seems alarmist to me, a form of fear-mongering that will encourage paranoia or fear-driven paralysis rather than faithful effort in facing known problems. There are too many well-founded oppressions and tragedies in this world to be worrying about every theoretical worst-case scenario possible. Furthermore, these fears could be used to fan American xenophobia as much as our rejection of our chemically-

dependent, over-specialized agribusiness and military systems.

**Todd Rainey, Bluffton, Ohio**

(Ed. response—You are right. My apologies. The problem was the editing, not the article. For a copy of the complete essay, write Blueprint for Social Change, Institute of Human Relations, Loyola University Box 12, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118).

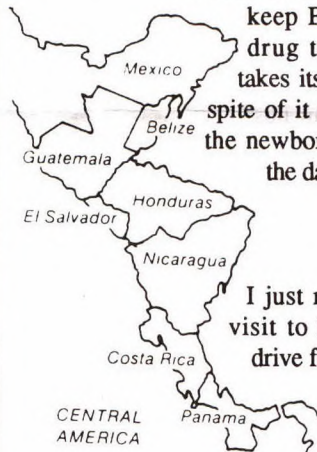
I feel strengthened by what Synapses has been doing. I wish and pray that our Thai Resource Center and Synapses will work closely together and the solidarity will last forever for the sake of the well being of all people.

**Prakai Nontawasee, Chiangmai, Thailand**

We appreciate the articles about Central America and the Philippines. It is difficult to get any real news here in Belize. The media are incredibly non-informative.

It's as if those in control want to keep Belize isolated. As the drug traffic flows north, it takes its casualties here too. In spite of it all, we see the hope of the newborn Jesus, and work for the day of rebirth in society.

**Dan Thibault, Belize,  
Central America**



I just returned from my first visit to Nicaragua. On a long drive from Managua to Quilili, I read Helen Gaspar's article "Respect for Life" from your

November Messages to my companeros, Bob Spitzer, Charlie Liteky and Brian Willson. Brian and his wife Holly have been caring for six year old Eric Lopez and his mother, Dora, both maimed and disfigured by contra bullets from a raid at Quilili a year ago. Helen's article, referring to the CIA, Pentagon and FBI as "anti-people and anti-life groups", in "low-intensity conflict" became chillingly apparent as we saw the destruction and violence the courageous Nicaraguan people are suffering.

**Jack Ryan, Peoria, Illinois**



We bless and thank you saints out there who've been interceding for the Philippines, its people and supporters all these years. You certainly encourage and exhort us no end to keep the faith, to continue struggling for truth, justice and freedom.

Flora Lansang, Los Angeles, Ca.

Thank you for lending us the film "A Dollar a Day, Ten Cents a Dance". At the University of Maryland's Multicultural Awareness Days the film was featured by our group. Without the help of Synapses we could not have made the event possible.

Rowena Cruz, Filipino Cultural Association,  
College Park, Maryland

(Ed. This poignant film about Filipino immigrant life in the US at the turn of the century is available from Synapses Asian Organizing Program. Call 312-421-5513.)

**EROS IS EMPOWERMENT:** EROS is *"the psychic urge to relate, to join, to be in the midst of, to reach out to, to value, to get in touch with, to get involved with concrete feelings, things, and people, rather than to abstract or theorize."* The erotic cannot be felt secondhand; it is personal, and herein lies the healing to feelings of powerlessness—authentic empowerment.



Gentle Readers—You may have forgotten about this column. Some of you have expressed disappointment at its demise. Our last entries were July, 1988. It is impossible, however, to have Windows of Opportunity (WOO) without people to look through them.

**WOO #15:** male, 26, graduate student, active in inner city church work. Enjoys playing piano, guitar, writing music. Seeking active, intelligent, progressive female who has a deep love for music. Open to any national ethnic background. Chicago area.

If you wish to correspond with WOO #15, write c/o Synapses. Be sure to put the WOO #15 on the envelope, so we can pass it to him directly.

## PULSATION

Synapses members—people who contribute a half-day a month of work, prayer or equivalent salary—are the pulsebeat of the organization. "Pulsation" provides an opportunity for members to share from the rhythm of their lives.



Jane Holmes and Elizabeth White are active, energetic, dependable and interesting retirees whose contribution to Synapses is invaluable. Jane has whipped our billing system (for copying, telephone etc.) into shape and is in the process of doing the same for our files. Hats off to Jane's low key, no nonsense organizational skills. Elizabeth, who has almost hit her eighth decade, has taken over our New York Times clipping service. She not only clips and files, but as a former member of the Socialist Labor Party of Illinois, she supplies a consistent class struggle perspective to our lunch hour discussions.

If you would like to join the Synaptic flow by becoming a member, let us know how you want to participate and we'll send you appropriate information to get started.



**Opportunities for office volunteers in the New Year include:** library work/resources; special mailings; answering phones; graphics(design and /or filing); letters to Congresspersons; updating mailing lists etc. Set your own hours.

Synapses member Vincent Flack, an authority on Swiss theologian Karl Barth, is putting his theology to work installing a new furnace for our downstairs apartment. He can fix your furnace or air conditioner too. Call him at 647-8735 in Chicago.

This is the ninth year of Synapses Messages' publication and we now have over 2500 readers. We are culling our mailing list, beginning with the United States. We don't have perfect records and we will err in favor of keeping you on the list. Nevertheless if we can figure out that we have not heard from you in the past year, we will assume you no longer want to receive this newsletter.



The purpose of Synapses MESSAGES is to link issues of justice domestically and internationally. Any parts of this newsletter may be used freely without permission. Please acknowledge the source and send us a copy of the reprint. Thanks.

If this is the first copy of MESSAGES you have received and you wish to get this bi-monthly newsletter regularly, please let us know. If you are not a Synapses member, a donation for printing and mailing costs will be greatly appreciated (if you can afford it). \$5 covers one year (6 issues). \$12 covers yours and one international reader's subscription.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

**NEEDED: Nurturer/maintainer type with a commitment to justice and spirituality to hold grass roots justice action office together.** Helpful to have experience, sense of humor and a few of the following skills - office management, bookkeeping, layout, volunteer co-ordination. Full or part-time position flexible, depending on skills or interest. Could be combined with Central America or other issue focus. Long hours, subsistence allowance, wonderful companions, all the Nicaraguan coffee you can drink. **Begin as soon as possible.** Contact Dorothy Friesen at Synapses, 312/421-5513.



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Eileen Fay, Terri Anderson, Nancy Friesen Thanks to all the mailing volunteers.

I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of nuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. -Martin Luther King, Jr.

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