

New Gold Rush Revives Old “Development” Model

By Jenny Peirce

The names of community members have been changed to protect their identities.

For Liliana, 59, the name El Dorado conjures up images of pennies rather than gold. She remembers her father coming home from the El Dorado gold mine tunnels with one and a quarter *colones* wage for a day’s work. That was in the 1940s, and now Liliana is tracking down the few people in the nearby communities who remember that mine, near the town of San Isidro, in the department of Cabañas. What they remember more than the grinding work are animals falling sick and dying near the mine after drinking from the rivers and lagoons contaminated by cyanide remnants.

Now, the Canadian company Pacific Rim is planning to exploit gold here at El Dorado once again, joining what some are calling “a new gold fever in Central America.” As the talk of gold grows louder, Liliana tries to bring the voices of past and future generations into the conversation with an industry that is growing notorious in the region.

When the price of gold started to rise in recent years, investors turned their attention back to Central America, where long-identified mineral deposits can now be extracted with new technologies based on the leaching of gold using cyanide and the enforcement of regulations on the industry is notoriously lax. The El Dorado mine would be the first commercial-scale gold mine in El Salvador, but there are at least fifteen applications for mine exploitation permission currently under government review.

* * *

On a Saturday morning in June, about fifty people from San Isidro, near El Dorado, gather in a school classroom. Questions and rumors abound, but every-

one has heard the good news—jobs, money, and new facilities are on the way. But the Titihuapa and Copinolapa rivers have started to dry out in the last few years, and farmers are concerned about their water supplies. Others have heard that mining towns in other countries have become magnets for alcohol and prostitution. Few of them know what the Oxfam-sponsored *No Dirty Gold* campaign is telling North Americans: that 20 tons of waste are produced to make a single gold ring.

People in this area have on average a fourth grade education, and both community activists and company officials try with difficulty to convey the intricacies of the mining operation. Pacific Rim circulates a colorful brochure explaining its commitment to environmental protection and gives presentations on the mining industry. This isn’t sufficient to constitute community involvement in the decision, according to the Social and Environmental Development Association of Sensuntepeque (ADES). For them, the numbers speak for themselves: of a projected annual profit of \$30 million for North American shareholders, 1% royalties to the San



Students attend a company-sponsored environmental presentation.

Isidro county government amount to \$300,000 and 148 jobs for locals for eight years. Meanwhile, ten thousand people, mostly farmers, are left with questionable water resources and the risk of future chemical leakage and health afflictions.

“This kind of project affects future generations,” says Antonio Pacheco of ADES. “People have a right to know how it will affect them. Only a well-informed population can make a good decision.”

The El Dorado project plans to extract an average of 80,000 ounces of gold per year from the subterranean mine over a projected operating period of six years. The mining process would use eight tons of cyanide and up to one million gallons of water per day to leach the gold from the rock, which is blasted out of a subterranean chamber. The chemical remnants of the leaching process settle in a tailings pond—a lagoon fitted with a thick geomembrane to prevent leakage—and then decompose by ultraviolet rays into carbon dioxide and ammonium.

Pacific Rim’s Frederick Earnest, the manager of the project, explains that after community consultation, the company decided to gather rain water rather than draw from the local aquifers and rivers for the mine’s operations. The company has undertaken an extensive publicity campaign to highlight its “North American” safety and environmental standards, although its environmental impact study cites the criteria set by the World Bank. The study determines that using current technology, there exist no long-term environmental risks, and the company is optimistic that the Salvadoran government will agree.

Gold Mines in Central America: A Tarnished Record
Both community members and company representatives are closely following the situation of gold mines in other Central American countries. The San Andres mine in Honduras is now notorious for the disaster caused when the tailings pond, which contain toxic levels of cyanide, overflowed into nearby fields. Additionally, in mid-June, there was a cyanide spill in the Bella Vista mine in Costa Rica. In El Salvador, earthquakes pose an additional risk to the stability of the tailings pond. Mr. Earnest insists that Pacific Rim is doing things differently, using twice the required safety technology.

In Guatemala, the struggle over mining is intensifying because of the right of indigenous communities to control natural resources in their lands, as stipulated in the International Labor Organization Convention 169. On June 18th, 2005, Mayan communities surrounding a proposed gold mine in San Marcos, Guatemala, held a referendum and voted 98% against the project. Although El Salvador has not signed on to Convention 169, the debate here is framed around similar questions, especially hinging on one key word—development.

In Cabañas, Pacific Rim’s plans to fund schooling and other community projects fits squarely into the development principles promoted by the World Bank: foreign investment and private sector incentives for education and other services. During the past decade, El Salvador has been the model student of the development strategies of the World Bank and the IMF, deregulating industries and courting foreign investors through emphasizing the minimal royalties that local communities such as San Isidro

From the Editor

It is with great enthusiasm that I introduce myself as the new editor of *Salvanet*. In 2002, I participated in CRISPAZ’s Summer Immersion Program, and I am happy to now join the CRISPAZ staff in El Salvador.

This edition focuses on the debate surrounding so-called development. The word “development” has many interpretations. We often refer to countries like El Salvador as “the developing world” or “underdeveloped.” Money-lending institutions like the IMF and World Bank sponsor large-scale “development” projects, and free trade agreements like CAFTA promise to encourage “development.” At press time, the White House had just sent CAFTA to Congress.

The Salvadoran reality indicates the dominant development model does more harm than good, exacerbating the problems that plague poor countries, while exploiting their people and natural resources. — Chris



CRISPAZ, Christians for Peace in El Salvador, was founded in 1984. We are a faith-based organization dedicated to mutual accompaniment with the church of the poor and marginalized communities in El Salvador. In building bridges of solidarity between communities in El Salvador and those in our home countries, we strive together for peace, justice and human liberation. As an organization, we are non-partisan and committed to nonviolence.

Comments or questions regarding *Salvanet* can be sent to: salvanet@crispaz.org

receive. For proponents of the mine, El Dorado would bring money to one of the most impoverished areas of El Salvador and could even stem the flow of young people migrating to the US.

Yet when Mr. Earnest explains on the local radio that Pacific Rim's primary purpose, "like any other company, is to earn profits for our shareholders," many residents aren't ready to hand over such influence on San Isidro's local services and development plans. "The government is corrupt here, and we don't receive anything, but we don't want the gringos involved," says Alejandro, a San Isidro resident who attended the workshop. Others are concerned that the company-sponsored training programs displace teaching resources from the local schools and only target potential mine employees.



San Isidro residents read information about the environmental impacts of mining.

CAFTA Raises the Stakes

Mr. Pacheco is concerned about the regional implications of the mining industry. "These projects are part of the free trade agreements being signed among the governments," he explains. "They cause health and ecological damage, but under the banners of democracy and trade, these projects are imposed on poor and unprotected countries."

The potential implementation of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) would further weaken the existing environmental protections. Environmental stipulations at a gold mine in California, for example, are under attack by a lawsuit from a Canadian mining company, based on NAFTA's Chapter 11 – a chapter that is duplicated in CAFTA and allows companies to sue for profit loss caused by regulations.

But the gold industry has a strong ally in the World Bank, which has loaned an initial \$45 million to Glamis Gold for its mine project in northern Guatemala. Widespread community protests have been dismissed as being an "anti-development" campaign. When the police were brought in to control protests at the site in January, and local resident Raul Bocel was shot dead, Guatemalan President Oscar Berger said, "We have to protect the investors."

Some church leaders are speaking up in defense of communities' right to decide the future of their land and resources. The Bishop of San Carlos in Costa Rica rejects the label "anti-development," for he envisions true development as based on "three pillars: agriculture, ecology and ecotourism." Guatemalan Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini of San Marcos received death threats after calling for Convention 169 to be respected and for local stakeholders to be part of the decisions about the gold under the soil.

* * *

In San Isidro, Liliana shakes her head and laments that many people, including church leaders, have already "been bought with caps and t-shirts," and that the prospect of money is dividing the community.

Pacific Rim says it has consulted sufficiently and that some groups are simply spreading lies. Mr. Earnest is immediately suspicious of the mention of religious groups, saying "they are often fronts for environmentalists, because Jesus never said anything about mining."

At the community workshop in San Isidro, many participants said this was the first they had heard of the environmental risks of the El Dorado mine. Jorge, of the nearby *cantón* Llano de Hacienda, wants an "impartial assessment with critical and scientific criteria." According to Mr. Pacheco, "We need maybe a hundred more workshops." He added: "People in North America must watch what their governments and companies are doing in other countries."

Meanwhile, near the El Dorado site, a group of schoolchildren inaugurated a Pacific Rim reforestation project, reading a Prayer to the Tree and sipping soda under a company banner adorned with balloons and environmental slogans. Not far away, hundreds of core samples are stored, awaiting analysis of mineral samples from the earth below.

Looking out at the hills near San Isidro, Clara isn't sure what to think. "All I know," she says, "is that the mine might bring jobs for a few years, but we will be left with the effects for many years after they are gone."✚

Rice Announces Plans to Build International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice revealed U.S. plans to build an International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador at a three-day General Assembly meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, on June 5.

During her opening speech at the gathering of the region's foreign ministers, Rice called for the leaders of the Americas to act on the pledge mandated in the Inter-American Democratic Charter to strengthen democracy where it is weak. Secretary Rice specifically mentioned Bolivia, Ecuador and Haiti as countries where democratic institutions need strengthening.

"We must act on our Charter to secure democracy with the rule of law. For our part, the United States is working with El Salvador to create in its country an International Law Enforcement Academy," Rice said. "This institute will train police officers from the entire hemisphere to better protect and serve their fellow citizens." Similar academies already exist in Hungary, Thailand, Botswana and New Mexico. In 1997, President Clinton agreed to establish an ILEA in Latin America.

According to the State Department, the ILEA's purpose is to "help protect American citizens and businesses through strengthened international cooperation against crime" and "buttress democratic governance through the rule of law; enhance the functioning of free markets through improved legislation and law enforcement; and increase social, political, and economic stability by combating narcotics trafficking and crime."

A coalition of Salvadoran activists, the Sinti Techan Citizens' Network against Free Trade and Investment, has called upon the Human Rights Office to demand that Salvadoran President Tony

Saca "make public the content of the agreement and develop an open process of debate and consult with all social sectors of the country before submitting it to the Legislative Assembly for ratification."

"It's no secret that the training of police forces and legal officials by the U.S. government forms part of a strategy of domination that manifests itself in an increased militarization and expansion of economic policies at a hemispheric level," wrote the Sinti Techan network in a letter to Human Rights

Ombudswoman Beatrice de Carrillo. "To argue for the installation of the ILEA in a country whose government disrespects human rights and doesn't fulfill its international commitments is inadmissible," the letter continues.

Fr. Roy Bourgeois, founder and president

of SOA Watch—the organization that has monitored the School of the Americas since 1990—said "Condoleezza Rice's recent announcement about plans for the creation of an International Law Enforcement Academy in El Salvador should raise serious concerns for anyone who cares about human rights. The legacy of the US training of security forces at the School of the Americas and throughout Latin America is one of bloodshed, of torture, of the targeting of civilian populations, of *desaparecidos*. Salvadorans don't need police units trained in military tactics by the US government; they need food, living wage jobs and access to healthcare."

El Salvador was not the United States' first choice for the academy. The U.S. originally signed an agreement with the Costa Rican government but public opposition blocked the project. Rice also disclosed intentions to create an ILEA in Peru. "We welcome the opportunity to work with Peru to expand the reach of that Academy into South America," she said.✚

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—Father Roy Bourgeois, SOA Watch

Human Rights Officials Warn of Social Cleansing Groups

On June 14, Human Rights Ombudswoman Beatrice de Carrillo joined Benjamín Cuéllar, Director of the University of Central America's Human Rights Institute (IDHUCA), in warning of the existence of extermination—or social cleansing—groups in El Salvador.

"If we don't take this problem seriously in this country, we are going to have a social debacle of incalculable magnitude. I believe there are extermination groups and the Attorney General and the police need to investigate. The problem is the issues are very engrained in the same system," said de Carrillo.

Cuéllar warned about hit men and social cleansing groups in February of this year. The IDHUCA director celebrated the fact that the govern-

ment has acknowledged that such groups exist, but rejected the notion that hit men activities are only being adopted by gangs, given that "death squads" were not dismantled and could still be operating as social cleansing groups.

Beatrice de Carrillo criticized the failure to investigate crimes. "I only see dead who've been executed; I don't see any will from the State to investigate. You never see a case solved and the police are detaining everyone, they do it for fun or for show, and then release them a day later. It isn't the judges' fault they don't have a case, because the case doesn't exist...there isn't any serious investigation of crime."✚

President Saca and Pope Benedict XVI Meet, Discuss Romero's Beatification

Salvadoran President Tony Saca visited Rome on Saturday, June 18, to meet with Pope Benedict XVI. In a private meeting that lasted almost thirty minutes, the two discussed the possible appointment of a Salvadoran cardinal and the status of Oscar Romero's beatification. Saca is the first Latin American president to be received by Pope Benedict XVI since his crowning, and only the fifth head of state.

"We've had a long conversation covering diverse issues," Saca told reporters after the meeting. "We reviewed our bilateral relationship, we discussed the Pope's concerns about Latin America, I officially invited him to visit El Salvador and we spoke of the canonization process of Monseñor Oscar Arnulfo Romero." Saca observed that Benedict XVI was very aware of events in El Salvador. "He knows the transformation from war to peace was impressive, that it is an example of a United Nations peace process and, of course, he sent his blessing as Holy Father to the Salvadoran people."

Pope Benedict XVI also discussed the beatification process of Monseñor Romero with Saca. According to Saca, his message was unequivocal: let the process continue and watch closely so that it doesn't become politicized. "The Pope knows that Monseñor Romero was a man of peace, a man of dialogue, and that we must let the beatification process take its course. But he also knows that Monseñor Romero's name has been used for political purposes, and he is opposed to this use as is the whole Church. He understands the situation clearly," Saca assured.

Saca added that the beatification "is a process that marches on, that should respect the memory of Monseñor Romero and that this issue should not be used as a political instrument, as has been the case in El Salvador in recent years."

A UN truth commission in 1993 determined that Roberto D'Aubuisson, then the military intelligence chief, ordered Romero's assassination. D'Aubuisson was the founder of Saca's right-wing Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) political party. ✚



Photo: La Prensa Gráfica

CAFTA and the Central American Textile Industry: Unraveling a Free Trade Myth

This article was adapted from a report by Public Citizen and complemented by insights from local labor leader Gilberto García.

On January 1, 2005, the World Trade Organization (WTO) ended its global textile and apparel quota system known as the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA). The lifting of the quotas is widely expected to lead to major job losses in Central America as well as in the textile and apparel manufacturing sectors in small Asian countries, Africa, the Caribbean and Middle East.

Until recently, the WTO quotas have protected Central American products from competition with Chinese and Indian textile and apparel goods by putting limits on exports from those countries. CAFTA promoters claim the new trade agreement will act as an economic lifeboat for the Central American countries whose textile and apparel industries are expected to be devastated by the conclusion of the MFA.

A new report released by Public Citizen entitled “Myth vs. Reality: CAFTA Cannot ‘Save’ Central American Textile/Apparel Industry or Safeguard the U.S. Industry after WTO/MFA Quotas End” disproves this argument.

“Because the public and policymakers have a negative impression of NAFTA’s effects on the United States, supporters of the CAFTA-NAFTA expansion are seeking to create a story about how the pact, for which there is limited congressional support, would help Central American countries,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “But when you compare the research data to the claims about CAFTA’s ability to ‘save’ Central America’s textile and apparel industries and jobs from the devastation of the ending of global textile and apparel quotas, the argument totally unravels.”

According to the Public Citizen policy brief, while “CAFTA supporters claim the agreement is essential to Central America maintaining its U.S. market share despite the elimination of WTO quotas, the reality is that CAFTA does not provide new tariff cuts for Central American goods that already enter duty free under an existing Caribbean Basin Initiative trade preference program.”

“The myths – from the notion that proximity to the United States will give Central American textiles an edge over China to the idea that CAFTA somehow

will grant additional tariff cuts for Central America – have combined to create an erroneous belief among CAFTA supporters that the agreement is a panacea for the Central American textile and apparel industry. Rather than being distracted by bad information, we must work on alternatives to CAFTA that will actually support Central American economies,” said Global Trade Watch Research Director Todd Tucker, who compiled the data.

Gilberto García, director of El Salvador’s Center for Labor Studies and Support (CEAL) confirms Public Citizen’s assessment. “It’s clear that NAFTA is not saving Mexico’s textile industry from the impact of the MFA. In fact, 30% of the imports that currently enter the United States are from Mexico; in five years it is projected that this will decrease to a total of 9% for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean combined.

“The multinational corporations, the big brand names, say that they won’t move their production. This contradicts what they have said before—that they don’t control the global production of orders,” García explains. “However, what they are doing is giving preference to companies that offer lower prices in countries like China, forcing the Asia-based companies to move production from Central America to Asia in order to offer the brand names lower prices by paying the workers lower wages.”

“Large brand names like the GAP have said that they *will* be placing fewer orders with businesses that work in this part of the world and will concentrate on purchasing from companies that are larger and more specialized,” says García, who is also the sole union-representing shareholder of Just Garments. “This benefits the brands because it simplifies their sourcing operations and lowers the prices for those who buy from them. But what will happen to the millions of people who work in the medium-sized companies?”✚

Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization that represents consumer interests in Washington. To see the complete report on their website, visit: www.citizen.org/pressroom/release.cfm?ID=1877.

Gilberto Garcia works with the Center for Labor Studies and Support. To subscribe to their list serve updates in Spanish, send an email to: ceal-es@union.org.za

Church Leaders on CAFTA and Development

“When evaluating this agreement from a moral perspective, it is clear that CAFTA does not place the human person at the center of its economic activity.” –the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 2005

“The idea of employment that CAFTA promotes is precarious employment that doesn’t produce development... If there isn’t dialogue and compromise isn’t sought, violence will explode in the region.”

—Gregorio Rosa Chávez, Auxiliary Bishop of San Salvador

“Looking at CAFTA through the lens of faith, we see a number of disturbing issues. Changes in trade policy mandated by CAFTA could force the developing markets of Latin America to be more open and free than the markets of the United States are currently. The removal of government protections intended to safeguard basic human rights, especially that of labor, and the protection of the environment need to be reconsidered. Finally, the rigid imposition of intellectual property protections may well result in making life saving medicines less accessible to the poor. Given these concerns, it does not appear that the effects of CAFTA will be to foster authentic human development, increase global solidarity, and to assist developing nations to attain their rightful place within the world economy.” –from the Jesuit Commission for Social and International Ministries in the United States (JCSIM)

“For nearly 20 years, our countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have been implementing a so-called development model that has led not to development, but to greater inequality and the loss of opportunities for the majority of people,” said Peruvian economist Humberto Ortiz, who coordinates the Humanization of the Global Economy project for the Latin American bishops’ council, known by its Spanish acronym CELAM.

In June of 2004, the Central American bishops and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a joint statement expressing concern about *“the ability of CAFTA to increase opportunities for the poorest and most vulnerable and enhance the prospect that they will genuinely benefit from increased trade.”*

“CAFTA negotiations have been conducted by trade representatives and legislators behind closed doors without adequate participation of campesinos, laborers, women, indigenous and minority groups, or the organizations who represent them.” –U.S. Interfaith Working Group on International Trade and Investment, which represents 34 religious bodies of diverse faiths

“The path of trade integration...has been presented as a wide avenue along which all can travel towards greater prosperity. In reality, it is a narrow path across a deep gorge that only the strongest and most capable can travel. It offers hope only to a few, and I fear no hope to those whom the Pope (John Paul II) calls the ‘weakest, the most powerless, and the poorest’.” –Guatemalan Bishop Alvaro Ramazinni’s Congressional testimony

“If globalization is ruled merely by the laws of the market applied to suit the powerful, the consequences cannot but be negative.” –from Pope John Paul II *Ecclesia in America*, 1999



CRISPAZ Sponsors Events Featuring Noam Chomsky, Mirna Perla and Dean Brackley, S.J.

As part of our 20th anniversary celebration, CRISPAZ hosted two speaking engagements featuring author Noam Chomsky, Judge Mirna Perla and University of Central America (UCA) Professor Dean Brackley, S.J.

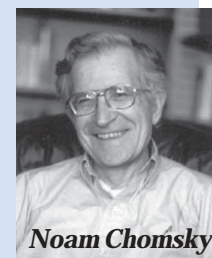
On March 10, Chomsky and Perla addressed more than 250 attendees in Boston's Hope Church, reflecting on El Salvador's violent past and current struggle to achieve a peaceful society.

Chomsky, a professor of Linguistics at MIT, is widely recognized and celebrated for the books and essays he has written on topics ranging from Reagan's Central America policy to media control to the Iraq War. His breadth of knowledge and astute political analysis is unmatched.



Mirna Perla

Mirna Perla is a Salvadoran Supreme Court justice and the wife of Herbert Anaya, the head of El Salvador's Human Rights Office who was assassinated in 1987.



Noam Chomsky

Dean Brackley, a professor of Theology and Ethics, gave a talk on "The Spirituality of Solidarity" at Xavier University in Cincinnati on April 15. Using the examples the Jesuit martyrs, Romero and thousands of Salvadorans who have struggled for peace in El Salvador, Brackley discussed how their experiences can help U.S. citizens who are working to stop violence in the United States and the world.✚

DVD copies of the Chomsky-Perla event are now available in limited supply from CRISPAZ for \$15. Please contact the CRISPAZ office to order your copy.

El Salvador: Out of the Headlines, Still in the Struggle

by Kevin Burke, S.J.
CRISPAZ Board Member

Twenty-five years after his death, Romero's legacy still gathers extraordinary people, including more than two hundred and fifty who crowded into Hope Church on March 10 for "An Evening with Noam Chomsky and Judge Mirna Perla." The event, sponsored by CRISPAZ, re-awakened Romero's story, as Mirna and Noam bore witness where witness needed to be borne.

Mirna Perla spoke first. An amazing woman, Perla is a Supreme Court justice in El Salvador. Despite the assassination of her husband, Herbert Anaya, in 1987, and the attempt to assassinate her in 1994, she continues to speak the truth in a country whose judicial system has been soaked in blood and cloaked in lies. She wove the tale of El Salvador today – after the massacres, the Civil War, the hurricane, and the earthquakes. She told stories of young people incarcerated in the prison system of El Salvador, stories redolent of the ancient myths of the scapegoat, stories of courage. She bore witness where witness needed to be borne.

Noam Chomsky followed Perla's presentation. An amazing man, the indefatigable Chomsky is one of the

most prolific and respected public intellectuals in the world. He connected the dots that link Ronald Reagan's El Salvador with George W. Bush's Iraq. A friend of Mr. Anaya, Judge Perla, and Oscar Romero, Chomsky spoke movingly of what his own eyes have seen: the suffering of the poor, the assassination of their defenders, and an ongoing cover-up of monstrous proportions. Dr. Chomsky did not spare us his marvelous capacity for irony! Nor did he spare us his amazing resources of hope. He, too, bore witness where witness needed to be borne.

Both speakers were honored by CRISPAZ at the end of the evening with plaques that bear the words of the witnesses they loved: of Herbert Anaya, for whom the threat that he might be killed paled against the threat that he might not be able to speak out for justice; and Oscar Romero, for whom education implies the creation of a critical spirit and not merely the transfer of knowledge. It was an evening of witness, for witness still needs to be borne.✚

Kevin Burke, S.J. is a professor of theology at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, MA. He spent time in El Salvador and is the author of "The Ground Beneath the Cross: The Theology of Ellacuria" and "Pedro Arrupe: Essential Writings".

CRISPAZ Teams up with Sierra Club on Anti-CAFTA Campaign

The Economics for People program of CRISPAZ seeks to educate the global north of the destructive impact of free trade agreements and how they contribute to the economic violence so prevalent in El Salvador.

As part of our education efforts, CRISPAZ has partnered with Sierra Club—the nation’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots organization with more than 700,000 members—along with Public Citizen, Witness for Peace, and STITCH for a “Faces of Trade” campaign, designed to put a human face on CAFTA and free trade.

CRISPAZ is lending its on-the-ground resources to the “Faces of Trade” campaign, conducting interviews with everyday Salvadorans in order to present personal narratives of individuals who will feel the impact of CAFTA, while STITCH and Witness for Peace collect stories from other countries in the region. The narratives will be shared with tens of thousands of people and members of Congress through emails, a flash animation and a website where users will be able to access action alerts and other information about CAFTA.

Watch www.crispaz.org and follow our email alerts in the coming weeks for more details.✦

Keep Tabs on the “Sippies”

Five Summer Immersion Program (SIP) volunteers, the “sippies,” are keeping online journals describing their experiences and accompanying various projects living in rural El Salvador.

See the journals, at:
www.crispaz.org/vol/sip/sip_2005.htm

“I have tried making tortillas twice and though I dropped my first tortilla on the ground, and all of my tortillas are lumpy and not circular, they are getting better!”

—Kristina Leszczak,
 Summer Volunteer in La Florida

If you liked an article that you read in *Salvanet*, we encourage you to share it with others in your publication. *Please cite CRISPAZ as the source.*

CRISPAZ has four focus areas:

- † Economics for People
- † Rural Community Accompaniment
- † South North Solidarity
- † Alternatives for High-Risk Youth

SALVANET, a project of CRISPAZ, is published four times a year.

Chris Ortman, Editor

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CRISPAZ Recommends *Through the Year*

Through the Year With Oscar Romero is a collection of excerpts from Oscar Romero's homilies translated by CRISPAZ board member and Xavier University Spanish professor Irene Hodgson. CRISPAZ staffer Jenny Peirce asks Dr. Hodgson about the new book, Romero's legacy and how translating Romero's words has impacted her personally.



Romero has been called both a classic and a prophet because his words are both timely and timeless. Particularly at this point in time after the nomination of a new and conservative Pope (who in his career has resisted the liberation theology movement) and with the

United States in the midst of war, where is the space in the public debate for Romero's words? How can we read this new collection available to English speakers—whether it's for the first time or again after many years—and reflect on Romero's message in a way that speaks to these times?

Even having read so much by Romero over so many years, working on this translation, I was amazed by how timely—and how strong—his words are. I think they speak to people in many countries about what God is asking of us and what our responsibility is with the poor and less fortunate. He seems to me to be saying that we are ultimately responsible for bringing the Kingdom or Reign of God to earth. He states clearly that God is not pleased when people make gods of wealth and consumer goods and exploit their workers and commit other kinds of social injustice and then think they have discharged their responsibility by going to mass on Sunday. Romero is telling us that we are responsible for doing something about the injustices in our countries. He also has a strong message about the role of the church in this. And he speaks directly to government leaders and to the wealthy, or privileged, about their responsibility. It is not a comfortable book to read, but it does make you think if you are open to it.

The final celebration and mass for Romero was the same day that the Pope died (April 2). People were saying that he had met God and that he had met Romero. I wondered what their conversation would have been like—and what they would say to a new Pope. Latin American theologian Leonardo Boff, who had been silenced by Cardinal Ratzinger—the Pope shortened it to a year—said that, as with a new president, we should give the new Pope 100 days. Boff said that he still has time to change his image if he wishes.

Romero is most known for and admired for the way he spoke out against social injustice but those who knew him best know that he was also a deeply meditative and prayerful person. How can Romero help us develop a meditation or prayer practice that nourishes—rather than distracts from—our reality and our place in the realities of the world?

I, personally, intend to look up the readings that accompany the sermons—these are in the English edition but not the Spanish one—and then reread all of the selections in that light. Eventually I hope to do the same with the eight volumes of the homilies and try to incorporate his message more into my own life.

You comment in your introduction that many Central Americans have little access to Romero's words because of the cost of books that contain his writings. Following the 25th anniversary of his death, how will his presence be sustained in the future? How might his canonization process in the Vatican and the decisions of the official Church in El Salvador (such as the move to no longer allow Fundación Romero to plan masses in the crypt) impact his influence on Salvadoran Christians?

It has been very important over the past several years that a different Christian Base Community has organized the mass in the crypt every Sunday. I was at a very powerful one in September when I was there for the CRISPAZ Board meeting. It was the Day of the Bible and the crosses in the procession bore images of war. Theologian Elsa Támez spoke about the story of Lazarus and the rich man. That story has always bothered me, and she said that the way it turned out, with Lazarus in heaven and unable to help the rich man, is not the way God wants it to be.

It would be sad to lose the energy of these masses. I understand the priest in charge of the crypt has said all Communities need to do is ask his permission to use the crypt for their celebrations, and I hope this is true. The day the new Italian statue was put on the new tomb in early April, once the bishops left, a group of Mayans took over the tomb for a time and their priests also gave a blessing, so this is also a possibility if there does turn out to be official resistance to these groups planning masses there.

As far as the canonization process, not all are sure this would be a good thing. If Romero becomes an official saint of the Catholic Church, would that in some way imply that no ordinary man can aspire to follow in his path, that one would have to be “special” to do what he did? And would that allow his image to be “tamed” and used differently? As I said before, his message is uncomfortable—for society, for the government, for the church and for the individual. Guillermo Cuéllar (author of the Salvadoran folk mass) says in his song “Proclámenlo Santo / Proclaim Him a Saint” that, while Rome is asking for proof of Romero’s miracles, the real miracle would be for all—including Rome—to follow his path.

I say an “official” saint, because as Jon Sobrino, S.J. made quite clear in an article for the 10th anniversary of Romero’s death, the people already consider him a saint. His name (and just Monseñor) as well as the places he lived and died are considered holy. His name invokes all of the martyrs. The words on the wall outside his house say that the people are not waiting for the “official” judgment. A priest from the Congo who spoke at the Week of Theology at the Jesuit University (UCA) said that a bishop assassinated in the Congo is being called “the Romero of Africa.”

In reflection 197, Romero tells us that we have no right to be sad. As we strive to take the world seriously and become seriously committed to justice, what is the place of joy? Is this element of joy lacking from the justice work undertaken by many North American Christians? How can Romero’s concept of joy inspire our work as we take seriously the injustices of the world?

This is part of why Dean Brackley, S.J. (UCA) says that we need the Salvadorans more than they need us. They have a hope and a joy even with all they have suffered and continue to suffer that is contagious to those who come into contact with them. How they can be so accepting and loving of North Americans when our government has contributed so much to their suffering is amazing and humbling. Part of that joy and hope is the image and message of Romero. God doesn’t want it to be this way, and we have to do something to make it better!

Before *Through the Year*, you translated Romero’s Diary. The translation of both works must have meant a great investment of time and energy and brought you a unique perspective on the meaning of Romero’s life and death. How has your involvement in the diary and this book affected you personally?

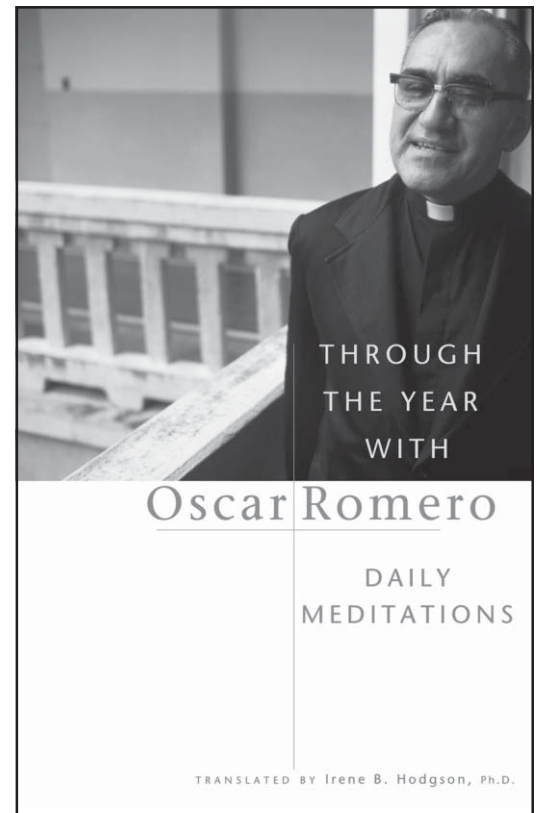
I had begun in the 1980s interpreting for Central American refugees and reading everything I could get ahold of on the situation in Central America. When I was first asked to

interpret, I didn’t, because I didn’t know what people would say and how much I would be identified with the words coming out of my mouth, with my interpreter’s “I.” When I heard Marta Alicia Rivera, who as head of ANDES, the Salvadoran teacher’s

union, had been picked up by a death squad and left for dead in the trash, I knew that I needed to help people tell and understand such stories. After I interpreted for Lutheran Bishop Medardo Gómez, I knew that I had to go to El Salvador—during the war.

When I was approached about translating Romero’s diary, I felt like I had been prepared to do it. I spent two years with Romero and the Diary—the same length of time Romero had taken to record it. I ended up talking to him about some of it—in an interview in St. Anthony Messenger magazine, Raúl Juliá described something similar in his experience of playing Romero in the film. I had the published diary, the transcript and the tapes. Hearing dogs bark—and toilets flush—on the tapes brought Romero into the room with me.

Talking in Nicaragua with César Jérez, S.J., who had been Jesuit provincial in Romero’s time, about the Jesuit mission in Central America caused me to redefine my own teaching mission. The national reality must be discussed in every class and students should be prepared to engage it. I began to talk more about the United States role in Latin America in all my classes. Some people say I am not really a Spanish teacher—I say that I have a broader definition of what that means. Some people say I should get a hobby unrelated to Latin America, but I think my life and my work are an integrated whole. Some people don’t want to hear about it, but all I can do is plant seeds and people will hear things when they are ready.✚



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