



photo Bill Ingles

## The cold war against oppression

About 50 people braved bone-chilling weather on Saturday morning to protest American involvement and Canadian complicity in El Salvador. January 23rd marked the 50th anniversary of the 1932 massacre of 30,000 El

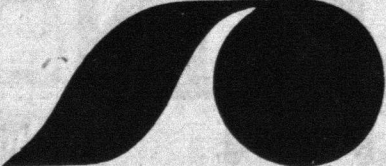
Salvadorians by the first in a series of military regimes to hold power. The present reign of terror has claimed the lives of 40,000 people between October 79 and December 81.



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### Canadian students report

## Poland's universities wracked

**MONTREAL (PEQ/CUP)**—A series of university strikes and occupations by students in Poland was experienced first-hand last December by two Quebec students who went there to attend an international student congress.

Jean-Marie Vezina of l'Universite de Quebec a Montreal (UQAM) and Ruth Phaneuf of l'Universite de Sherbrooke had been sent to Warsaw to represent l'Association Nationale des Etudiant (e)s du Quebec (ANEQ) at an international student congress organized by NZS, an 80,000-member independent Polish student union associated with the Solidarity trade union.

The congress had been scheduled to take place December 9-13, but was cancelled when a series of student protest actions disrupted the country's educational system. However,

Vezina and Phaneuf did not receive notice of the cancellation as they were already in Europe.

The protests resulted from complaints by students at the University of Rhadom that the election of the university's recount had been fraudulently managed.

The protestors also called for an accelerated vote by the Diet (Polish government) on a law concerning universities. This law calls for the self-administration of the universities, as well as calling for students to play a more active role in the selection of university administrators and in the determination of university programmes.

More than 500,000 students participated in marches and university occupations over the course of more than a month. Entry to some of the universities was carefully restricted to prevent

anyone from scuttling their action.

Vezina and Phaneuf were able to obtain the necessary documentation for entry to three institutions, the University of Warsaw, the Warsaw Polytechnical Institute, and the National School of Agriculture, through the national office of NZS.

"These are people who are struggling to democratize their society," said Vezina. "They must live in the face of the economic situation as it is in Poland, with the food shortages and line-ups. They were all aware of the political situation... They could all feel the tensions."

According to the ANEQ delegates, the Polish population extended massive support to the striking students. One woman, a former student of the agricultural school, donated 10,000 zlotys to the students. Solidarity also made a loan to NZS, and provided food to the students who were occupying the universities.

Plans for a protest march in Warsaw had to be discarded.

The strike ended on December 12, when the students decided to return to their studies after the government promised to vote on the law.

Vezina and Phaneuf left Warsaw the same day, one day before Polish leader General Jaruzelski declared martial law and closed the universities.

"The night we left, or perhaps the next day, a number of people we had met in the NZS, including external secretary Joseph Taran, were arrested, and NZS was dissolved," said Vezina.

The universities have since been re-opened, but ANEQ intends to pursue further actions on behalf of the Polish students.

"ANEQ is planning a day of solidarity to get \$10,000 to help NZS re-form," said Vezina, "and there will be a campaign to get information about those who were arrested."

There has been no word from Poland concerning the fate of the student leaders who were arrested when martial law was declared.



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