

Salvadorean oppression discussed

by Greg Halinda

The plight of the Salvadorean peasant was brought to Edmonton, last Thursday when Omar Ramirez, a spokesperson for the rebel powers in El Salvador, spoke to a group of about 25 persons on the U of A campus.

Ramirez spoke through a translator to his audience and was accompanied by former U of C student Rhena Hymovitch of SalvAide, who spent a month fact-finding in El Salvador.

"The Salvadorean peasant has not enjoyed the right to work the land for his own subsistence for many years," said Ramirez.

Ramirez spoke of the "scorched-earth" policy of Salvadorean president Duarte, who he says denies that a dual (government and popular) power situation exists.

Hymovitch showed slides of burning cornfields and bombed-out peasant homes.

She was in the village of Arcatao

just after it was looted by the Salvadorean army in April 1986. "The troops burn crops and hiding places. They try to encircle, catch, and kill peasants."

Peasants are always ready to flee in an exodus ("guinda") from Salvadorean troops and have a knapsack ready with whatever food and clothing it can hold.

"The only problem is we can't put the agricultural production in our knapsack and take it with us," said Ramirez.

Ramirez listed the prime daily objective of communities under popular control as "the self-defence of the population." He did not elaborate on training and weapons sources needed for this self-defence.

Popular governments are also responsible for organizing the work and production needs for areas not under Salvadorean government control.

Ramirez and Hymovitch want

the Canadian government to stop sending aid to the Salvadorean government.

Ramirez said such aid is being directed to military hospitals by Duarte and not to the peasants in the countryside.

"The U.S. does not understand...what communism is."

Nicaraguan policy studied

by Dean Bennett

Various aspects of the United States' foreign policy concerning Nicaragua was the topic of an information forum hosted by International Relations and Strategic Studies Club last Friday.

American foreign policy intervention in Nicaragua extends back to before the turn of the century, according to U of A history professor David Johnson.

Johnson focused on the Central American treaty of 1907 as key to

Food and medicine is getting through via the Catholic church and groups such as SalvAide.

Omar Ramirez grew up in El Salvador and by 1973 was involved in organizing peasant unions in the country.

Rhena Hymovitch and Canadian student Rob Taylor were arrested by the Salvadorean Army last April for being in a war zone without approval of the government. Both were released after three days.

American interests in the region. The U.S. wanted stability in the area to control vital U.S. interests, particularly the Isthmian Canal. They also felt loan defaults in Central America could bring European intervention.

The treaty tried to ensure Central American governments would be expressions of the will of the people. Any future governments that took over by revolution would not be recognized.

This idea was fine with present

Central American governments as they were the ones already in power. True elections were, of course, neglected.

According to Dr. Fred Judson of the Political Science Department, the effects of the current war in Nicaragua have been horrendous.

"Everything in the country revolves around the war. There is only one working elevator in the whole country. A minimalist life of consumption has been made impossible by the war," he said.

Professor Leslie Green was particularly spiteful in his speech, condemning the U.S. for ignoring international law in the Nicaragua matter.

"The U.S. does not understand more than any other country what communism is," he said. "Which of the U.S. presidents since 1848 has read *Das Kapital* and understood it?"

The UN Charter states all members are sovereign and are equal, and are allowed to choose their own form of government. In the case of Nicaragua, however, the U.S. justifies its actions by claiming its inherent right of self-defence against attack.

"The United States feels it's incumbent upon itself to protect Central America from alien concepts being brought into the territory," he added.

To solve the dispute, Nicaragua took the U.S. to court at The Hague and the judges voted 15-1 for Nicaragua (the one dissenting vote was by an American judge). The Reagan administration, however, refused to recognize the decision, claiming the court a communist one.

Nicaragua then tried to have its decision carried out by the UN Security Council, but the U.S. then exercised its veto power and killed it.

The best analysis of American attitudes to Central America came from Johnson who quoted former U.S. president Howard Taft as saying "...mixed blood, brown-skinned people are incompetent to judge their own affairs."

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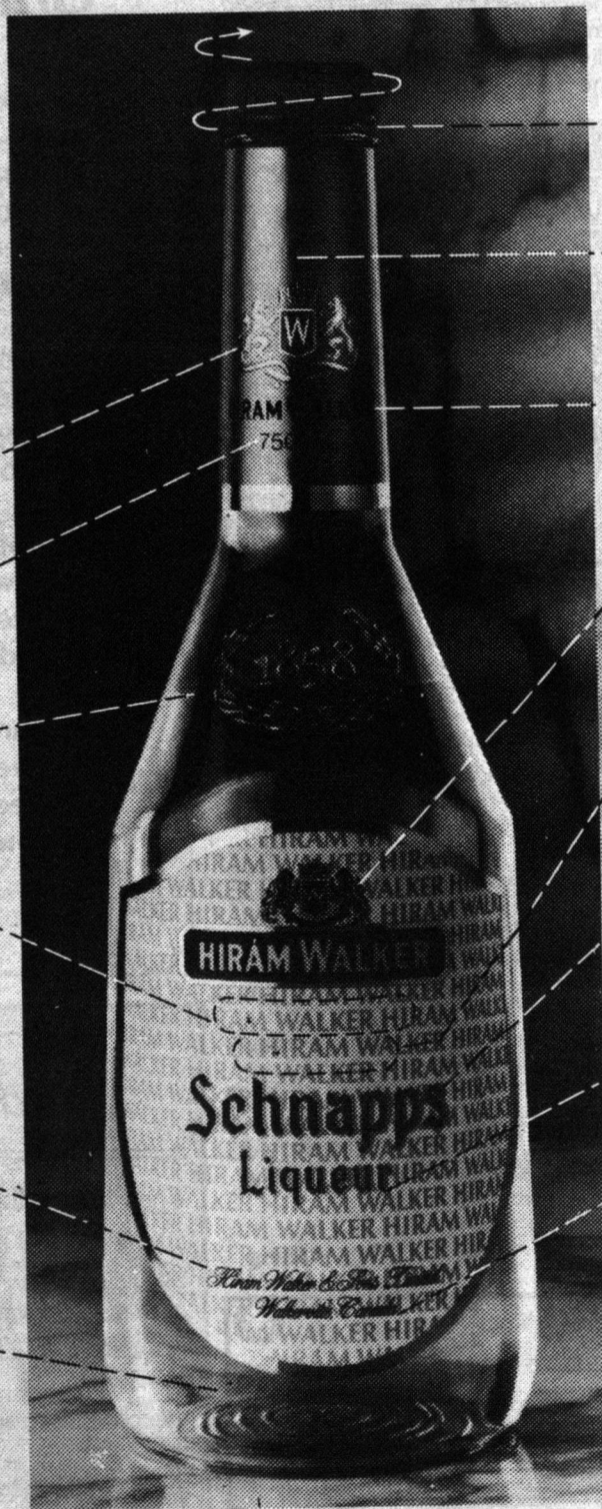
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