

No beating around the Bush

ARRIVING BACK in Canada one day before the coalition troops bombed Baghdad had an apocalyptic effect on my

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consciousness, especially because I was returning from Nicaragua. Mention of war there is much more a reality than a chapter in some grade seven social studies text or a day off in November. And war for Nicaragua, waged against the likes of Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Oliver North and all the other "pro-Am" supporters, means dirty business, manipulative politics and irreparable damage in the "effects" side of war (ie: communities destroyed, families brutally murdered, pro-people projects like new schools and hospitals burned to the ground and the national economy ruined).

There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Canadian government has locked itself into an American exercise class and the calisthenics here are another effort to show the world who's really clasp the purse strings and power. Just as dreadfully obvious is the coalition members' desire to get a piece of that power and its ripe benefits (oil and control of the Gulf), despite the insurmountable destruction it will cause.

Definite parallels can be drawn from the situation in the Gulf and recent history in Latin America, especially when talking about the "U.S.A. and Allies Inc."

Just over one year ago, 24,000 U.S. troops invaded Panama making it the biggest display of military force by Washington since the Vietnam War. The U.S. estimates that about 300 civilians were killed, but that

figure has been heavily disputed. Former U.S. Attorney General Ransay Clark accused the Bush administration of lying about the numbers of Panamanian casualties. Clark says his investigations indicate that at least 1,000 and possibly as many as 7,000 Panamanians were killed. Mass graves were found holding the bodies of brutally murdered civilians and according to Linda Hossie's article in the *Globe and Mail* (Jan. 8, 1990), sources in Panama City cited stories of Panamanian soldiers being gunned down by U.S. helicopters after fleeing their headquarters in Old Panama.

An observer of the anniversary demonstrations in Panama City, who wishes to withhold her name, says that the group "Mothers of the Disappeared" remain a persistent force in Panama, where the lives of many remain a mystery from this invasion.

In Nicaragua, the U.S. - backed contras have only recently begun to surrender some arms and demobilize in the countryside. Yet in the past ten years, Nicaraguans have suffered a contra war that saw the loss of 30,000 people and cost the country the equivalent to \$17 billion dollars (U.S.) which would have been better spent on education, health, agrarian reform, social programs, etc. The American administrations have continuously supported the contra presence in Nicaragua and have charges set against them in the World Court.

At the other end of this war were the Sandinistas.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) began its position as government on July 19, 1979 after a bitter civil war

against the Somoza dictatorship. From that time until the elections last year, the Sandinistas managed to provide schools, health centres, social programs and agrarian settlements to a population in Nicaragua that would have otherwise never received it. The changes over ten years in power brought autonomous government to the indigenous peoples on the Atlantic coast of the country. Despite the positive changes during this time, the contra war existed and could not be ignored.

During 1990, throughout the election campaigns and even after the Sandinista defeat by UNO (a 14-party opposition coalition), the contras continued killing, destroying and kidnapping civilian targets. Many peasants were threatened to vote for UNO, the U.S. choice in the election.

There has been much skepticism about the UNO "victory" in the elections so many mainstream journalists have called "democratic". For one, UNO received \$9 million dollars from Bush's administration. In fact the Nicaraguan government at the time only had \$3.5 million to pay for the election process itself. Second, just before election day, the Voice of America claimed U.S. aid for the contras would continue should the FSLN win. With a population drained from the ten years of contra war, plus an American embargo disallowing trade with Nicaragua making enormous economic problems, the U.S. created a psychological war above the everything else.

Yet, Nicaragua has not forgotten nor laid down their struggle for justice that the revolution prompted. The broad-based trade unions, agricultural workers, women's or-



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ganizations and youth groups are highly organized and committed to the prospects of equality in Nicaragua. Last July a national strike held the UNO government paralyzed until they conceded with demands for constitutional respect and democracy. This workers' victory was celebrated nationally and internationally.

George Bush's demand for greater control and economic benefit in Nicaragua will, without fail, be strongly opposed. Like the Gulf war, he will likely try to foster support for any action he takes. Knowing Mulroney's record, he's got at least one avid supporter. The country may be different but the ideology looks the same. So what caution can we conclude? Watch out for power and watch out for those who hoard it.

Yvonne Hanson



Quick and easy

by Wilfrid Dinnick

Can there ever be a justification for war? Life can never have an economic value but the Persian Gulf crisis is too serious to ignore.

Everyone is aware of the hypocritical U.S. device. In many ways the U.S. manufactured awareness in the Persian Gulf crisis, for it's not the first Iraq attack on Kuwait. If full of principle, why did the U.S. not lead in South African sanctions? The difference is economics. Almost all wars evolve from economic conflicts and these U.S. motives are neither new or surprising. Such American interests should be secondary to the real issue of Hussein's aggression. If the U.S., for even economic purposes, supports the U.N. to solve a rotten situation should we automatically protest it?

"Give sanctions more time!", cries peace, but how long will they take or last? Like so many unsuccessful sanction attempts, time is the most crucial tool, yet this becomes its' own demise. People lose interest, costs skyrocket, and funds are diversified from needy eastern European countries or even Canadian education. Hussein would starve his people for the Iraqi army

and most probably to finish a nuclear bomb.

Increasing apparent atrocities in today's global village need the U.N. more than ever. There was global consent and authority to solve the Gulf crisis through the U.N. The authority to talk globally had proven that peace was exhausted. Should everyone now throw away the U.N. resolutions? When a law is made one cannot just ignore it like Saddam Hussein. Tragically, there must be force to those words or future U.N. words will not have meaning and nobody can afford that.

War is disgusting and atrocious but unfortunately the world is not entirely decent. What the 'Butcher of Baghdad' has done to the people of Kuwait, his constant nuclear threats to Israel, chemical attacks in his own country, and worse, his personal future threats has to end. Hopefully, the twenty-eight intervening U.N. countries and Bush's economic alter is justified from preventing a much worse crisis in the future.

Let us all pray for the people of Iraq, all the soldiers, and that the deaths are minimal and the war is quick.

Black history month

by John Burchall

Tomorrow is the first day of Black History Month. It is a month on the calendar when people of African ancestry in the West focus on their existence in this hemisphere.

The idea for the present celebration of Black History Month grew out of the first wave of Harlem Renaissance in the 1920's. This was a colourful and very productive period for persons of African ancestry, that resulted in an unparalleled excellence in the fine arts.

Writers associated with this period include Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston and Claude McKay.

Carter G. Woodson was a black educator and historian. He founded Black History Week which took place the second week in February in honour of Fredrick Douglass's birthday.

It is from these simple but proud beginnings that the present celebration called Black History Month has developed.

For many people outside the Black community the existence of such an event as Black History Month is met with mixed reactions. Some are totally ambivalent, while others question the necessity for there to be such an event.

I would like to address those who hold these opinions, especially the latter.

I've heard a quite reasonable white friend of mine question why Black peoples need to have events such as these. They tell me that if someone were to call a month, "White History Month", such an event would stir up much controversy.

My response is that people of African ancestry (and other oppressed peoples), have been subjected to years of miseducation. They have been taught the white

man's history. Any conscious person of colour makes a clear distinction between HISTORY and HIS-TORY.

The problem is that the white upperclass educated European male has, for years, thought of himself as the centre of the world. He passes off his limited viewpoints as THE viewpoint. To speak of himself as THE MAN by which all other people are measured.

As a result of this arrogance people of colour have had the white man's HIS-STORY shoved down our throats, to the point where we have internalized it and see ourselves through the categories of the Eurocentric perspective.

The most damaging fact of hundreds of years of miseducation has been that Black peoples have believed that they have no history and that their ancestors never made any positive contributions to the human family.

Such "facts" as these are not true. The existence of Black History Month is a testament that we, the people of the African Diaspora, have a history, we have a homeland and that we are worthy of being treated as human beings.