

Guatemala. The Washington-based Institute for Policy Studies reports that the United States has supplied Guatemala with some sixty-six million dollars in military aid. Additional support has been provided by the US to Guatemala through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). The CBI was originally supported by the foreign ministers of the United States, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela as a mini-Marshall Plan to assist nations in the region facing rising oil costs and the severe economic consequences of falling export prices for sugar, bananas, cotton and minerals. But this type of aid is designed to serve US strategic interests by supplementing military assistance in order to secure a safe environment for private investment. Many students of the CBI are unconvinced of the capacity of private investment alone to turn the tide of the present economic malaise. In Guatemala, for example, economic stagnation is facilitated by the continuing flight of capital which to date nearly offsets economic support coming from Washington and from private investors in North America and Europe.

Latin American distrust

The Reagan administration is also confronted with

deep distrust by most Latin American nations as to its real intentions toward the region as a whole. US abandonment of its inter-American security obligations under the Rio Treaty during the Argentine-British war sparked a crisis of trust over the question of hemispheric solidarity. Latin American nations now perceive US strategy towards them as being based solely on selfish national goals, enlisting client states in the hemisphere to serve its narrow interests.

In the face of this complex international dynamic of mounting Latin American resistance to Reagan's actions, the official US posture is widely regarded in Guatemala as one of stubborn support for the Guatemala military. Publicly, the Reagan administration has shown little interest in supporting democratic and human rights groups in Guatemala. Diplomatic and military overtures from the United States have encouraged Guatemala's security forces to carry on its program of torture, illegal detention, denial of constitutional guarantees and of social activism. The strategic value of Guatemala has taken a giant leap and the presence of the United States will remain, not only in the form of private business, but also through government intervention. In a country where the tide of social reform is so insistent, that may be only a finger in the dike. □

Rural USSR City lure and farm inefficiency

The trouble with Soviet agriculture

by Thomas Land

The need for farm equipment operators will double in the Soviet Union within a decade, but a timely report warns that the drift to the cities may well deprive agriculture of its best potential young recruits. The study, compiled by an eminent Soviet economist, analyzes one of the reasons contributing to his country's third disastrous grain harvest in three years necessitating vast cereal imports.

Over the last decade, some fifteen million people have left the collective and state farms of the Soviet Union for the bright city lights. About two-thirds of them were young and educated, men and women in the prime of their lives. Much of this relentless manpower drain affects areas of declining agricultural productivity, especially in North-West, Volga-Vyatka, Central, Far East and West-Siberian regions.

This spells growing problems for the future of an already troubled yet vital sector of the national economy, so concludes a study compiled by an eminent Soviet economist and published by the United Nations International Labour Office (ILO) in Geneva. For example, the need for farm equipment operators in Soviet agriculture is expected

to double during the coming ten to fifteen years but, despite crash training efforts, the study projects a continuing stagnation at the present level of the labor supply if the drift to the cities is allowed to continue. And there is no prospect of imminent change.

The study, "Stabilizing the USSR's Rural Population through the Development of the Social Infrastructure" analyzes one of the crucial reasons contributing to the Soviet Union's persistent inability to feed itself. It follows the country's third disastrous grain harvest in three years necessitating continued huge cereal imports which are, in turn, likely to ensure the maintenance of high global price levels beyond the reach of the poorest nations. It coincides with increasing public awareness within the Soviet Union that the poor harvests cannot be blamed forever on the weather alone.

E.N. Khomolyansky, the author of the study, argues that the rural exodus is responsible for the greying as well as thinning of his country's agricultural labor force. The ranks of workers in the twenty to forty-nine age bracket are declining, while the proportion of elderly workers is rising.

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