

Nelson Garcia of the FMLN, El Salvador, speaks in Victoria



by Andrée Scott

Nelson García, now touring Western Canada to enlist support for the FMLN, the leading opposition party of El Salvador warned us that his talk would be bleak: there have been further setbacks to democracy in El Salvador.

1. 62% increase in delinquency and social violence; up to 12 murders a day; the government imposes ever stricter penalties but does nothing to ease the causes of crime. New anti-terrorism laws and laws against public actions bring no social progress. Recently, a group of policemen were accused of being a death squad.

Nelson Garcia, photo: B. Hay

2. Rising cost of living: the minimum urban salary is about \$150 per month; the rural minimum about \$80. 31% of Salvadorians now live on less than 1\$ a day.

The harsh neo-liberal policies mean that living conditions continue to worsen: 41% are unemployed and the government does nothing to create new jobs. Remittances from the 760,000 Salvadorans in other countries to their home families account for a major part of the economy. The available jobs are low-paying maquila work. It's a downward spiral: people earn less—their basic needs cost more.

3. Erosion of democratic standards: the government controls the police. Recent laws are harsh and unconstitutional, e.g. anti-terrorism measures and anti-organizing laws. These new laws were invoked to repress and charge those who recently protested against the privatization of their water. Many sectors have already been privatized: the telephone system, sugar production, electricity, pensions, refineries etc.

One of the present government's grandiose plans is to be part of 'Puebla-Panama': a wide swath of highway from Puebla, SW of Mexico City, through Central America to Panama, for easier access by trans-nationals to resources. In El Salvador, a huge march protested against a mining sector plan of Canada's Pacific Rim Mining. Why? Because the Company plans to mine in a sensitive delta in the north of El Salvador, the main source of the country's water. Pollution of the environment is inevitable.

Nelson also spoke about health care, "Just 3 months ago, several 'white marches' were held to support the Health Workers in their struggle against Privatization. There's corruption in the structure of the privatized Health Services; it takes money from public care to give to the private clinics."

The speaker also responded to queries about USA military bases, "There is one in El Salvador, one in Panama. USA police schools will train guards for USA businesses: the graduates will enjoy impunity. El Salvador, to our sorrow, is the only country in Central America to have troops in Iraq."

Venezuela has been helping El Salvador; it sends oil, and promises to send gas one day, through ALBA, a regional pact supported by the FMLN, for cooperation and sharing. The present government, however, has signed on to ALCA (Free Trade of the Americas). Venezuela also offers scholarships to Salvadorians to study either in Cuba or in Venezuela. The second group of Salvadorans to study in Cuba, 2500 students, has just graduated.

Nelson works in the Transport Commission of El Salvador, in crisis because the government has cut off its subsidy. Fuel prices have doubled, ticket prices have risen accordingly, and these increases will only continue. The FMLN will press for reinstatement of the subsidy and for an end to the price increases. For 2009 Presidential elections, he asked for continued solidarity and the support of the presence of international observers.

LOST LOGS & LOST JOBS by Ben Parfitt



Resources and opportunities to generate jobs from coastal forests are routinely squandered and in the absence of much-needed reforms the situation will only worsen, says a new study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The study focuses on two troubling trends plaguing the coastal industry: rising log exports and mounting wood waste. It finds that the combined effect of wood waste and log exports was a loss of an estimated 5,872 jobs in 2005 and 5,756 jobs in 2006. In the last two years, on average, one in three usable logs were either exported or left on the ground to rot.

Changes to BC forest policies beginning in 2003 paved the way for increased log exports and numerous mill closures. With each mill closure the pressure increases for further exports. Reversing the present and vicious downward spiral of forest industry job loss and coastal community upheaval is imperative and requires a new approach by government.

Sharp rises in the wasting of logs match changes to BC forest policies that allowed companies to leave usable wood behind in exchange for nominal payments to the provincial government. In 2005 alone, the usable logs wasted on the coast would have filled the beds of 103,826 logging trucks – enough to feed two large sawmills.

Adding insult to injury, rather than turning those logs into forest products that could have locked carbon up for decades, they were left to rot. That means more CO₂ in the atmosphere, which further complicates BC's ability to meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

The province should restrict the ability of companies to export raw logs require companies to invest in new mills or upgrade existing ones and penalize companies for unacceptable levels of wood waste. Bringing an end to log exports and wood waste should be overriding policy objectives for both the provincial and federal governments.

from: BC CCPA June 28, 2007 The complete report, *Wood Waste and Log Exports on the BC Coast* is available at www.policyalternatives.ca.

Urgent Appeal to Activists and Trade Unions

“I implore the people of the West...to stand with Iraqi people in their time of need.”

Hassan Juma'a Awad Al-asadi, President of the Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions

The Hydrocarbon Law now before the Iraq parliament could give control over the development of Iraq's oil to foreign companies for 30 years. This law has been promoted by the UK & USA governments, oil companies and the IMF.

Beyond the devastation, military occupation, the effect of years of sanctions and the violence of every day life, Iraq may now loose control of the source of 95% of its revenue.

Iraq's neighbours, Kuwait, Iran and Saudi Arabia do not permit foreign control of their oil development. This proposed law would not allow Iraqis have the control or the profits from much of their oil sales.

For more information: www.waronwant.org/iraq and www.handsoffiraqoil.org



NO FUTURE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS by James Loney

On November 26th, 2005, I was kidnapped in Baghdad. My associates and I, all members of a Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation, were held by Iraqi insurgents for four months. Tom Fox was found dead on the streets of Baghdad on March 9th, 2006. Two weeks later, Harmeet Singh Sooden and myself, both Canadians, were rescued along with Briton Norman Kember by British and American soldiers.

In November 2006, we were told that an unspecified number of men alleged to be our kidnappers were in US custody. The RCMP and Scotland Yard want us to testify in a trial to be held in Iraq's Central Criminal Court (CCCI). An RCMP officer told us, "The death penalty is on the table."

Faced with a life-and-death decision, we learned more about the court's proceedings. Journalist M. Moss witnessed five 15-minute CCCI trials in which all defendants were found guilty and given harsh prison terms. Many of them appeared in court without having seen a lawyer. The court's proceedings are closed to the public. A recent report from the UN Assistance Mission to Iraq says the CCCI "consistently failed to meet minimum fair trial standards." Amnesty International reports that some 100 people have been executed and at least 270 more have been condemned to death.



James Loney, after release

But, as in the days of Saddam Hussein, nobody knows how busy Iraq's gallows are. Citing the lack of transparency around the death penalty, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights has requested the commutation of all death sentences. The Iraqi government refuses, arguing capital punishment is a "public deterrence"...

Amnesty has called for a moratorium on capital punishment in Iraq, and for the US and Britain to stop handing over condemned prisoners to Iraqi jurisdiction. A Pentagon report says, "Iraq's judiciary is technically independent but unable and unwilling to provide a balance to Iraq's powerful political parties." Or to its powerful occupier, it seems...I recently informed the RCMP that I will not testify. I cannot participate in a judicial process where the prospects of a fair trial are negligible, and the death penalty is possible.

The death penalty is the legalization of vengeance. It is cruel, degrading and irrevocable... Capital punishment is a manifestation of the very violence it claims to deter. The US entered Iraq with guns, saying Iraq was a threat. Insurgents took up guns to get rid of the US and its guns.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said there is no future without forgiveness. Norman, Harmeet and I have forgiven our captors. Our reason is very simple. We've had enough with bombs and guns and gallows. We want to see an end to all killing, regardless of the reason. Capital punishment is simply the legal face of the dead-end cycle of violence and retribution for violence that is destroying Iraq.

We want to see something genuinely new and different, a future that begins with the power of forgiveness. Both sides are caught in a death spiral.

Trying to stop a war with guns is like trying to put out a fire with gasoline. The only power capable of ending violence is the power of non-violence.

This is a shortened version of story on: <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/05/24/1420/>

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THE EMPIRE IS BIGGER THAN BUSH: The Ideas & thoughts of a USA activist

By Bruce K. Gagnon

People often ask me, "What should we do about all this? How can we stop Bush?"

I would first say that we must move beyond blaming Bush. The fact of U.S. empire is bigger than Bush. Hopefully by now, all of us are more clear how the Democrats have been, and are now, involved in enabling the whole U.S. military empire building plan. It is about corporate domination. Bush is just the front man for the big money. So to me that is **step #1**.

#2 is to openly acknowledge that as a nation, and we as citizens, benefit from this U.S. military and economic empire. By keeping our collective military boot on the necks of the people of the world we get control of a higher percentage of the world's resources. We, 5% of the global population in the U.S., use 25% of the global resource base. This reality creates serious moral questions that cannot be ignored.

#3 is to recognize that we are addicted to war and to violence. The very weaving together of our nation was predicated on violence when we began the extermination of the Native populations and introduced the institution of slavery. A veteran of George Washington's Army, in 1779, said, "I really felt guilty as I applied the torch to huts that were homes of content until we ravagers came spreading desolation everywhere....Our mission here is ostensibly to destroy but may it not transpire, that we pillagers are carelessly sowing the seed of Empire." The soldier



wrote this as that army set out to remove the Iroquois civilization from New York. Our history since then has been endless war. Two-Time Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Major General Smedley D. Butler, U.S. Marine Corps, told the story in his book War is a Racket. Butler recalls in his book, "I spent 33 years and 4 months in active military service....as a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism....Thus I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street....I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927, I helped see to it that Standard Oil went on its way unmolested."

4 We have to change how we think about our country. We have to learn to understand what oligarchy means. I'll save you the trouble of having to look up the definition - ***A government in which power is in the hands of a few.*** When you have lost your democracy then what do the citizens do? They must fight (non-violently) to take it back. This of course means direct action and sometimes civil disobedience.

#5 Forget the "every man for himself" mythology. We are all brainwashed in this country to believe in the rugged individualism story. But movement for change can only happen in community - working with others. So forget the ego centric notion that "one great man" is going to come save us. It's going to take a village - in fact all the villages. We must form community to work for the needed change if we are to protect our children's future.

6 What about my job? Another smothering myth in America is success. Keep your nose clean and don't rock the boat. Don't get involved in politics. We become controlled by our own subservience to the success mythology. We keep ourselves in line because success and upward mobility become more important than protecting free speech, clean water, clean air, and ending an out of control government bent on world domination. Free our minds, free our bodies and we free the nation [and the world].

#7 Learn to work well with others. Sure we all want to be stars. But in the end we have to learn to set aside our egos if we want to be able to work with others to bring about the needed changes.

8 It's the money. How can I do this peace work when I have to work full-time just to pay the mortgage. Look at the consumerist life we lead and see that our addiction to the rat race keeps us from being fully engaged in the most important issue of our time - which is protecting the future generations. Explore cooperative living; building community that will free us up economically to be able to get more involved.

9 Learn to read again. Many of us don't read enough. We spend our time in front of the TV, which is a primary tool that the power structure uses to brainwash us. We've got to become independent thinkers again and teach our kids to think for themselves. Reading and talking to others is a key. Read more history. All the answers and lessons can be found there.

#10 Learn to trust again and have fun. Some of the nicest people in the world are activists. Meet them and become friends with them and your life will change for the better.

These are just a few of my ideas. Send me your ideas and I will post some of them on my blog. By sharing our thoughts with one another just maybe we can speed up the needed changes.

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<http://space4peace.blogspot.com> (our blog) (text has been slightly edited to fit OP format)

POETRY PAGE

A Saturday Afternoon

By Theresa Wolfwood

put away the banners
stack up the placards
the demonstration is over
a few hundred hardy souls
clumped under umbrellas
it always rains in March
weary and dejected
we cleave to friends and home

we dry out our socks and jeans
drink hot tea to chase the chill
we wonder if anyone cares
what effect we had
do the Saturday shoppers
just think oh not again
those crazy protestors
why don't they get a life

some fret that media
ignore us and politicians don't
answer letters
bombers rain down their gifts to the world somewhere in Asia, Africa,
Latin America, a mother gathers
tiny fragments of almost
weightless legs arms organs

while we drink our tea
and plan the next event
rain or shine



Photo by TW

Notan

By Jane P. Brett

-- dedicated to U.S. war resisters in Canada
*We pierce doors and windows to make a house;
and it is on these spaces where there is nothing
that the utility of the house depends.*
-- translation of philosopher Lao Tse

these are no mean feet
on a man who comes to say
he has fired many rounds
but no more
he will not fire | he will not
what is dark is not light
(and his appeal will fall to you)

Oklahoma trailer-park peasant
needing a wiser way to feed his children
when asked to kill small Iraqis
penetrated families of doorways
ransacked houses | destroyed real homes
maimed | killed three generations
but his visual literacy is such that he
can not see Iraqis as "sand niggers"
what is light is not dark
now
no more beheaded Iraqis as soccer balls
(this falls to you)
he is cutting out and shooting a farther goal
the gentle Okie-mom of his own dear children
says he survives daily nightmares
"he couldn't speak for months"

the occluded war crimes turf
 that's the border he has crossed
 (that's his appeal to you)
he will not fire — "no more"
(and would not)
he hangs fire | like water
he has flowed north where
he is not home to implicating team mates
(his appeal may fail)

inside each cut-out window and door
a boundary of darkness has fallen
close your eyes if you want to see outside
he will not fire — he will not

now tell me you can resist