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Immigration & the farm crisis

One effect of the hastily passed immigration bill is certain — it will further strengthen an agricultural interlock between the United States and Latin America. And that is going to do even more to harm small farmers up here and down there. The immigration law wants to cut down on the flow of Latin immigrants by slapping sanctions on employers. Yet at the same time it allows a generous guest worker program with good chances for residential legalization which will provide growers with a steady stream of cheap field labor.

That labor is not just necessary for hefty farm profits and low food prices for American consumers, but to develop a growing food export market in Latin America. Over 40% of US farm output now goes for export. Yet because of an astonishing world food glut, more and more of the world's markets are shrinking for US farm exports. Latin America, as one of the world's main food deficit regions, is becoming a key market for US-grown food.

Latin America has 16% of the world's arable land, yet only six percent of its population. In principle, Latin America should be able to share in the kind of farm miracles that have recently taken place in Europe and just about all of Asia. Yet peasants are abandoning small farms in droves to stream into immense cities, while the arable land is being taken over by export-oriented farm enterprises.

In the US, too, small farmers are being squeezed off the land. That land is being taken over by big corporate farm interests which produce mounds of grains. Those staple gains increasingly serve to feed the urban and much of the rural populations of Latin America. The daily food of tortillas, rice and beans of more and more Latin Americans these days is made in the USA.

Meanwhile, Latin American farms, also tending toward large-scale size, are producing vegetables,

fruits, and luxury crops like drugs for the American markets. What is left over goes for local consumption. Taken together, all this forms the US-Latin agricultural interlock whose victims on both continents are small farmers.

Yet small farmers are the key factor in the European and Asian farm miracles. Today, all of Western Europe produces so much food that Europeans quip it would be cheaper for them to give away their stockpiles of wheat, meat and butter than to sell it.

The farm miracles of Asia are even more remarkable. Japan's tiny peasantry produces a glut of food. China, shifting back to the independent small farmer, now produces more than enough food to feed its billion-plus people. India, with its 700 million has also become more than self-sufficient in food. Java, a tiny island housing 100 million people, produces more than enough food to feed itself.

The secret to the miracle is the independent small farm family, backed by appropriate technology and generous government support.

That triple key is absent in the Soviet Union, which remains a chronic food deficit region of the world and a major importer of US food. Its large-scale socialist agriculture in many ways resembles the large-scale corporate agriculture of the US. Both are top-heavy in technology and rely on low-paid labor.

It's become evident in the United States that the market-obsessed Reagan administration is making the same mistakes as the Soviets with their socialist planning obsessions. Both think large-scale high-tech farming is more efficient.

But because of that "efficiency," the food lifelines of hundreds of millions of people in the United States and now Latin America are dependent on a few immense farms. If those farms should falter, as they do in the Soviet Union, then those lifelines could be endangered.

It would seem the new immigration law has locked us into an agricultural relationship with Latin America which is going against the grain of farm miracles elsewhere in the world based on the small farmer. —**Franz Schurmann**

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Franz Schurmann teaches history and sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. (C) PNS

Due to the increasingly unfavorable economics of alternative publishing, the Review must, at least for the time being, switch to a newsletter format. We apologize to our readers and hope you will stick with us through these less than joyous times. Remember: there are only 24 more shopping months until the 1988 elections.

Reagan's quiet army in Central America

The Reagan administration is using what it calls a "low intensity strategy" in Central America to reassure the US public that its policy is neither menacing nor dangerous for US troops. The National Guard is an integral part of this strategy. The Army National Guard participates in military construction, medical and civic-action programs, and military maneuvers to train the Honduran army. This provides a public relations cover for extensive militarization. It also provides for back-door deployment of US troops in Central America. Since they are being sent under the auspices of training, they do not need congressional approval. Air Guards from 15 states in the last year have been flying regularly to Panama, the headquarters of the US Southern Command. From there they make runs into every country in Central America, with supplies, including military supplies. A Californian Air Guard wing has been flying as many as three times a week to Central America out of Van Nuys Air National Guard Base since 1978.

The Air Guard has taken over a task that ten years ago would have been the job of the regular Air Force. Since Richard Nixon's total force policy in 1973, however, the National Guard no longer functions as a state militia. It has become an essential part of the Pentagon. By the end of 1987, 51% of the Army's combat forces and 52% of its support forces will be in the Guard and Reserve. Further, Army reserve components now provide 50% of the special operations forces and 90% of the psychological operations and civil affairs units. National Guard and reserve units cost only a fraction as much as regular military units and the Pentagon can rely on them rather than enlarging the conventional military.

Resistance to this trend has won support from the governors of Massachusetts, Maine, Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio, Vermont, and Washington, who have refused to allow their units to be deployed in Honduras. The governors of New York and Arizona have reserved the right to say no on a case-by-case basis, and the governors of Minnesota and Wisconsin have privately told activists that they would do the same thing. Meanwhile, moves are afoot in Congress to restrict the states' rights to control their Guard units. As assistant Pentagon secretary James Webb

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put it in congressional testimony: "The governors' authority has become a vehicle to debate or influence foreign policy. This is no longer a case of a few isolated incidents. It is a demonstrated way for dissent groups, state legislators, and state governors to seize a forum to debate foreign policy." — Peggy Moore

Recon Publications. Peggy Moore is coordinator of the Clearinghouse for Information on the National Guard Issue.

Greens in the US

Although the Green movement continues to show vigor in Europe and its ideas comprise probably the most important new political philosophy since the rise of the social welfare state, Green-oriented activism lags far behind that on the other side of the Atlantic.

There's an irony in this. Last year, Jonathon Porritt, the British author of *Seeing Green* told us: "A lot of us in Europe have been nurtured on the thinking of American greens. One thinks of people like Theodore Roszak, Hazel Henderson, Murray Bookchin, who have provided a vast part of the building up of the philosophy of green politics... And yet, in terms of a movement coming from that in America, it's relatively underdeveloped."

A year later, there are signs that an embryonic green movement is taking shape here but it remains still largely ill-formed, with more potential than reality. Several efforts to give some substance to the American green idea have still to make much headway. It's hard to know what is going on with the theoretically-oriented Committee of Correspondence since it doesn't seem to correspond even with its own mailing list. The Yuppies have organized groups in New York City and elsewhere and have started holding conferences and planning an alternative slate for 1988. There is an interesting newsletter, the *Green Letter*, and Mark Satin's *New Options* is often green-oriented although NO's options range all over the place, pursuing what Satin refers to a "post liberal" thought. Some local Green parties have also been started.

It is possible, and would not be surprising, that green manifestations in the US will grow in a form quite unlike those in Europe. To a certain extent this has to be true since America, with its odd