

# SISTER CITY UPDATE

Number 2

Richland Center - Santa Teresa

August 1990

## News from Santa Teresa -- After the Elections

Tom Bachman went to observe the Nicaraguan elections in February, and was in Santa Teresa on election day. He was very impressed with the high degree of popular involvement and the level of excitement that the elections generated among the Nicaraguan people.

The elections in Santa Teresa were very close, with the Sandinista party winning after a vote recount. Their City Council is now made up of 3 Sandinistas and 2 UNO supporters to approximate the voting results. A new Sandinista mayor, Luis Matus, has been chosen by the council. Luis Palacios, the former mayor and our sister city contact person is now the mayoral assistant.

Connie Vanderheyden, from Gays Mills, was part of the WCCN Women's Tour of Nicaragua in June. She formed a "sister co-op" relationship between the Kickapoo Exchange and a women's chicken-raising project (nicknamed "Los Pollos Politicos") at a cooperative near Managua. She also went to Santa Teresa to deliver some medicines our project sent to their Health Center. While she was there she spent a few hours talking with former mayor Luis Palacios.

She learned that construction of the Pre-school building, for which our project has raised some money, was set to begin. It had taken a long time and some sacrifice to accumulate money and materials for the endeavor. One area of town had given up its street paving plans in favor of helping build the Pre-school.

Other building projects Santa Teresa hopes to accomplish in the next five years include a water system for the outlying municipality of El Cacao, a basketball court, more street paving, and a bridge to serve a community that is cut off during the rains.

Luis expressed gratitude and greetings to his friends in Richland Center, and hopes that our sister city relationship will continue.

We think it is important to keep up our relationship and support for Santa Teresa, especially since it's a Sandinista town in UNO-governed Nicaragua. The Santa Teresa city government wants to show that it can accomplish things despite its minority political status.

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The Gays Mills Central American Support Group is hosting a gathering of people interested in current political issues, local as well as international. Everyone is welcome to come share frustrations and inspirations, voice their concerns, and help envision a group evolving to support those working on interconnected environmental and political concerns. There will be music and a potluck dinner. For details, call Ricardo at 872-2333.

Saturday, August 26th 3:00 pm **FROM VISION TO ACTION . . .** Kickapoo Exchange, Gays Mills

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## Recent Events in Nicaragua

The economic situation in Nicaragua is worse than ever. Inflation is out of control and the UNO government has cut back health care and pensions, suspended food and transportation subsidies, and fired many government workers. There is conflict about the government's moves to return, to its former owners, land that was given to campesinos during the past 10 years. Many of these landowners were Somoza supporters, and some of them are now returning to Nicaragua.

Discontent with these events led to the national strike in June. People felt strongly about UNO injustices, and wage demands were made in the context of an inflation rate of 600% since the February elections.

## El Salvador Alert

It's a crucial time for the people of El Salvador. In June, the U.S. House voted to withhold 50% of the military aid for that country in the face of continued human rights violations by the ARENA government. In September, the Senate will be voting on a similar bill. The FMLN and the Salvadoran govt are involved in negotiations mediated by the UN. It's important to pressure congress to cut off all military aid, and support a negotiated settlement to the bloody 10-year-old civil war. The repressive military government can only stay in power with our tax dollars.

Cesar Joya Martinez defected last year from a death squad in the

Salvadoran army. He's the man who showed the Congressional task force on the Jesuit murders incontrovertible evidence about US advisors' involvement in death squads and torture by the Salvadoran military. Amnesty Int. believes the US should grant him asylum.

The US State Dept, fearing further revelations, is trying to arrest and deport Joya. They have arrested his brother in California with the clear intention of deporting him to El Salvador, where he would be a hostage to keep Joya quiet.

Joya has information connecting his Salvadoran army intelligence unit and its US advisors with the Jesuit murders. If this was made public, it could stop US military aid to El Salvador. The house task force on El Salvador (Rep. Joseph Moakley, D-MA, chair) wants to hold a bipartisan hearing to examine Joya's charges.

Contact your Congressman to stop the deportations and call for a full hearing into Joya's charges. Rep. Moakley's hearing will be closed--encourage him to make the findings public.

This newsletter was put together by Jane Furchgott and Stein Goering. We welcome your questions or comments about any of the issues raised here. Please direct responses to:

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**Meeting Notes**

The Richland Center sister city group met on July 11th, and got a brief report from Connie on the above-mentioned trip. We also continued a discussion on the possibility of bringing someone from Santa Teresa to visit our area. Dr. Neil Bard, who had previously expressed an interest in having a health care worker come here for training, indicated that other members of the Richland medical community were supportive of the idea. Connie reported that when she had mentioned the idea to Luis Palacios, he was very interested. He had suggested that we contact two young doctors who work at the Santa Teresa Health Center.

Neil agreed to follow up by writing to Drs. Cruz and Suarez Lindo and ask if there are medical workers there who could benefit from the project.

We also heard about a proposal from the sister city project in Bloomington, IN, calling for a joint sister city effort to obtain some of the funds being channelled to Nicaragua by the US Agency for International Development (AID). The idea was to write a grant proposal for public health care funding that would go to our respective sister cities.

Those present at the meeting decided that the Richland Center project should pursue the idea, and several of us have undertaken the tasks involved. Some of the ramifications of this decision are discussed below.

**US AID Grant Proposal**

A proposal has been prepared and presented to the AID to fund grass roots health care projects in Nicaragua. The idea is to build on the existing experience of four sister city partnerships: Bloomington, IN; Ann Arbor, MI; Providence, RI; and Richland Center. The portion of the proposal for Santa Teresa was prepared by members of our group (Jane, Stein, and Neil).

We think of this aid request as a one-time grant that will empower the people in Santa Teresa to better meet their own health care needs. We have proposed funding for basic medical, dental, and ophthalmological equipment that we know is lacking in Santa Teresa, as well for the El Cacao water system. We also asked for money to bring two health care workers to the Richland Center area for training, and to provide support for them during their 2-month stay. The request for Santa Teresa totaled \$50,000.

If the funding is approved, the actual distribution of funds will be done according to a plan developed by the people of Santa Teresa. Our proposal was based on our best guess of what their health priorities are. All those involved in preparing the grant agreed that their continued participation would depend on US AID allowing the sister city partners to manage the project in a democratic

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[US AID, continued]

way. The big question is whether AID will fund a progressive plan for delivering health care to the people of Nicaragua.

The issue of participating at all in a US AID funded project is a controversial one. Many people in the Nicaraguan solidarity movement are suspicious of, or totally opposed to, any involvement with AID. Questions that have been raised include: Will the money come with political strings attached? Will we become susceptible to co-option on other solidarity issues? Will required accounting reports become part of intelligence gathering activities? Will the controversy divide Central American solidarity groups in the US?

Those of us who have been working on this project, while recognizing the negative nature of much US AID activity worldwide, offer a number of reasons for our involvement to this point. We note that the Sandinistas have indicated their support for US material aid to Nicaragua, and we

feel that the people of Santa Teresa would favor this particular project. It would enable Santa Teresa to provide a better health care system, with less dependence on outside facilities. We feel that it can bring more interaction between the peoples of our two communities, especially through the trainee program. Many people from our project have had positive contact with the Central American Scholarship Program at UW Richland, which also receives AID funding.

We would welcome input from other members of the group on these or any other aspects of this undertaking. A complete copy of the draft proposal is available at the Brewer Library.

US AID may well reject the proposal on the terms we have offered, and even if it is accepted, our project is still free to withdraw. If it does not happen, we still want to pursue the plan to provide training in R.C. for health care workers from Santa Teresa; we'll just have to raise the funds ourselves.

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— SANTA TERESA —**

