

TO: Ned Alpers, Carol Thompson, Bill Minter, Immanuel Wallerstein,
Willard Johnson, Allen Isaacman, Henry Bucher, Ann Seidman

FROM: Chris Root, Political Action Committee chairperson

RE: Collaboration between ACAS and Central America scholars and
activists

DATE: January 18, 1984

The chief of South Africa's defense force, General Constand Viljoen, on December 29 cited the U.S. invasion of Grenada to justify the latest South African attack on Angola. In January, the majority on the Kissinger Commission came out in support of continued U.S. covert backing of the Nicaraguan insurgents, while Newsweek reported late last year that CIA backing for UNITA in Angola continues despite the congressional ban.

These developments are clear reminders of the similar dynamic and U.S. strategic perceptions of the regional conflicts in southern Africa on the one hand and Central America and the Caribbean on the other.

ACAS can take a variety of approaches to explore and publicize this comparison. Since this work falls within the purview of several individuals and committees in ACAS, I thought I would outline some possible tasks, ask for comments and additional suggestions and inquire who would like to carry out which responsibilities.

I. Establish relationships with organizations of progressive scholars (and, secondarily, activist groups) working on Central America

A. Identify such groups. Carol Thompson has given me contacts for Latin America Perspectives, Policy Alternatives for the Caribbean and Central America (PACCA), Nicaragua Task Force of LASA, Guatemala Scholars Network, and Faculty Concerned for Human Rights in El Salvador and Central America (FACHRES-CA). Among activist groups, we could contact U.S. Out of Central America, CISPES, Nicaragua Network, EPICA and Washington Office on Latin America. Do you have other suggestions for groups and contact people? Specifically, does anyone have contact with NACLA?

B. Send outreach letters, suggesting communication and joint projects as listed below. The steering committee asked me to take this on; I will get out letters within the next few days. Would some of you like to take responsibility for maintaining living, personal relationships with particular organizations during this year?

C. Suggest at minimum exchanging of newsletters and meeting notices, plus the projects listed below.

II. Organize one or two ACAS panels at the October 1984 ASA meeting comparing Central America and Southern Africa. We initially talked about one panel; Carole Thompson has suggested two -- one on destabilization and a second on socialist transformation. Work leading up to these panels could involve putting individuals scholars on the two regions in direct touch with each other and

sharing papers beforehand. The steering committee asked Ned Alpers to co-ordinate the comparative panel (with Allen Isaacman co-ordinating another one on destabilization just in southern Africa, and Henry Bucher overseeing ACAS panels at ASA overall). Are there others who would like to work with Ned on this?

III. Work with members of the Latin America Studies Association to organize a similar comparative panel at the next LASA meeting. Carol Thompson is willing to work on this.

IV. Publish a selection of papers on Central America and Southern Africa, generated by the panels or commissioned separately. Some ideas for placement of articles include ASA's ISSUE magazine, SUNY-Binghamton's Braudell Center journal, and Latin America Perspectives. Would someone like to work on this, co-operating closely with those who are developing the panels)?

V. Produce a few popularly-written comparative articles, for example for The Nation or newsletters of national activist organizations. Any volunteers?

VI. Co-operate on political actions with Latin America groups. Immanuel Wallerstein will speak on behalf of ACAS at a New York rally of U.S. out of Central America in April. Other suggestions?

I look forward to hearing from those of you who have ideas about this project or want to help implement it. The political action committee will also discuss this and other projects at a meeting scheduled for next week.

I think this project could bear fruit that is both intellectually exciting and politically important. I look forward to hearing your ideas and interests.