

Latin America Solidarity Centre

Information Pack

An information and learning resource providing
an introduction to Latin America

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Updates are available on www.lasc.ie

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What is LASC?

The Latin America Solidarity Centre (LASC) is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1996. LASC is an initiative for cultural promotion, development education and campaigning solidarity, linking Ireland and Latin America.

Vision

LASC believes in a Latin America and an Ireland based on equality, social justice and an equal expression of cultural, social, political and economic rights for all human beings.

Mission

LASC's mission is to challenge the current economic and social injustices in Latin America and Ireland by engaging in public awareness raising, education, information exchanges and campaigns in solidarity with the people of Latin America.

What does LASC do?

- * Offers solidarity to Latin America social movements
- * Co-ordinates Latin America Week
- * Runs courses in Latin American Development Issues
- * Runs courses in Latin American Spanish
- * Organises public meetings & talks
- * Runs a resource centre, email news list and website
- * Supports sub-groups campaigning on specific issues
- * Organises cultural events

Get involved in LASC:

Become a member:

Become a member of LASC for €25 or €10 (unwaged). Send your details (name, address, phone number & email) with a cheque/postal order to: LASC, 5, Merrion Row, Dublin 2.

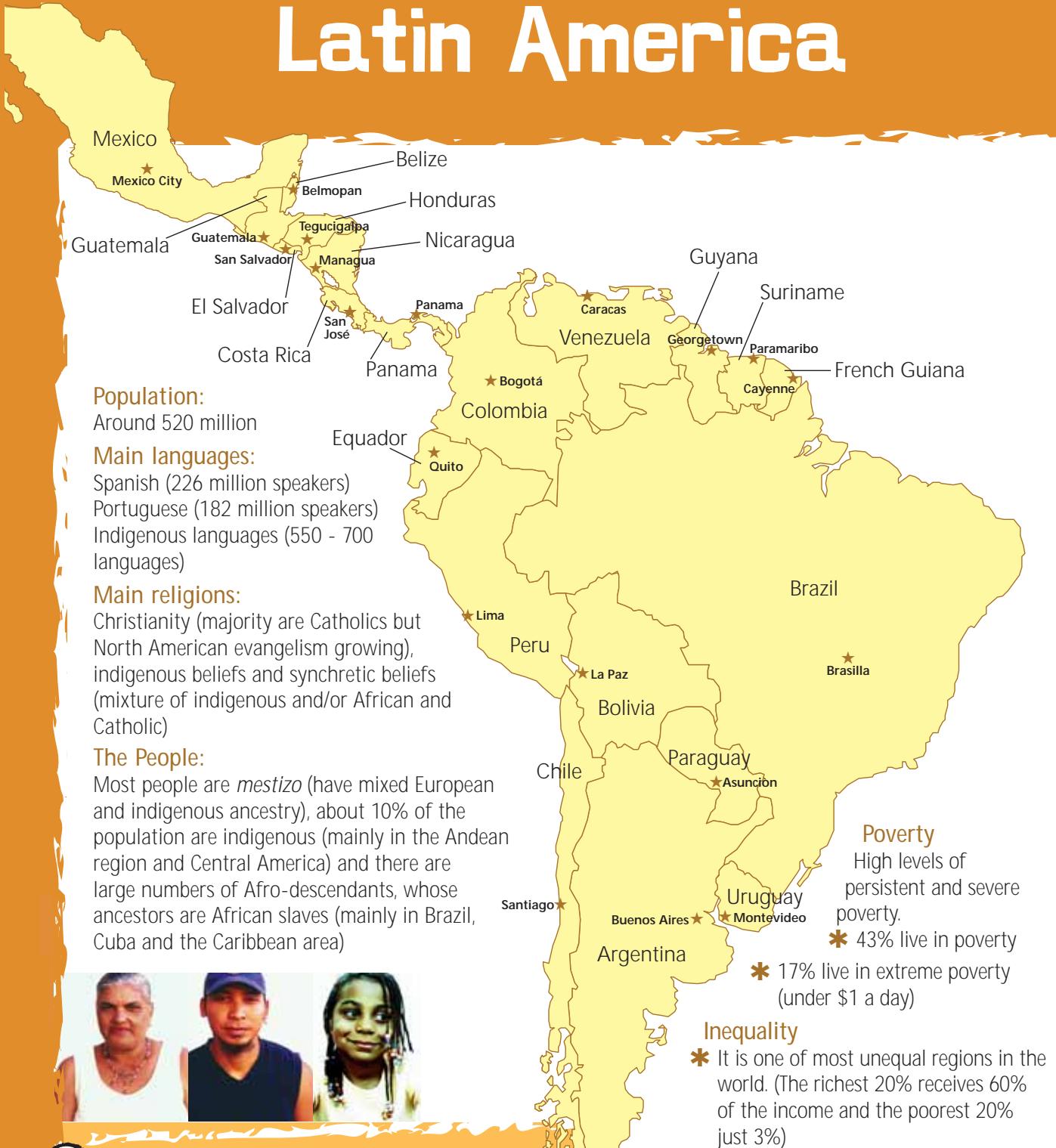
Volunteer:

LASC has lots of opportunities for volunteers and has campaign groups which you can join. Contact the Volunteer Officer at LASC for further information.



Kankuamo in Pavee point. Photo © David Speirs

Latin America



Diversity - Creativity - Dynamism

- * An inspiring history of powerful social movements
- * Unique indigenous cultures, past and present...
- * Rich cultural heritage, gave the world salsa, Pablo Neruda, Buena Vista Social Club, Liberation Theology, Garcia Marquez, City of God, Frida Kahlo and many others
- * Thriving popular cultural movements, from murals, to carnival to community theatre
- * Biodiversity and geographical variety: Caribbean, the Andes, the Amazon river, deserts, pampas and more
- * Home to chocolate, maize, potatoes, tobacco, chilli, avocado, peppers and more



Inequality

- * It is one of most unequal regions in the world. (The richest 20% receives 60% of the income and the poorest 20% just 3%)
- * The indigenous and Afro-descendant are the most disadvantaged and marginalized. (In Brazil, Peru and Bolivia poverty amongst these groups is twice the national average)
- * Guatemala has one of most unequal distributions of land in the world: 65% of the cultivable land is controlled by 2.1% of population

Human Rights

Electoral politics are reasonably consolidated in most countries, and there are no military governments. However systematic abuse of human rights continues and civilians continue to be the principal victims of political violence

Learning about Latin American issues

LASC Resource Centre:

LASC holds a range of books, magazines and information leaflets on Latin American for sale or for loan (members only).

- What to read as a basic introduction to Latin America:
- * Faces of Latin America – Duncan Green (1997)
 - * Open Veins of Latin America – Eduardo Galeano (1998)
 - * I, Rigoberta Menchu – Rigoberta Menchu (1983)
 - * Modern Latin America – Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith (2000)
 - * Introduction to Latin America: Twenty-First Century Challenges – Peadar Kirby (2003)

Latin American Development Issues Course

LASC runs an annual 20- week course in Latin American Development Issues in Ballsbridge College of Further Education, Dublin 4. Contact LASC for information and see www.lasc.ie for course guide.

Websites on Latin America

- * Latin American Bureau - www.latinamericabureau.org
Information, country profiles, organisations & contacts, on-line bookstore.
- * Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC) - www1.lanic.utexas.edu
Internet-based information from or on Latin America.
- * Latin America Data Base on-line news service - www.ladb.unm.edu
Internet-based news service in English about Latin America
- * North American Congress on Latin America - www.nacla.org
Information on major trends in Latin America and its relations with the United States
- * Latin American Development Archive <http://www.soc.jhu.edu/ladark/> LADARK contains data sets and other information useful to social scientists who are doing research on Latin American development
- * Latin America Press - www.lapress.org
Specialize in the production of information and analysis about events across Latin America
- * Oberlin College, US - <http://www.oberlin.edu/faculty/svolk/latinam.htm>
Sources and general resources on Latin America

Websites on Latin American History:

Latin American History Chronology

<http://www2.truman.edu/~marc/resources/chron.html>

Pre-Colombian History

<http://regentsprep.org/Regents/global/themes/goldenages/meso.cfm>

<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/CIVAMRCA/CIVAMRCA.HTM>

On-line Lessons on Latin American Independence era

http://nhs.needham.k12.ma.us/cur/Baker_00/#latinamerica

On-line Lessons on Andean History

<http://www2.truman.edu/~marc/webpages/andean2k/>

Latin American History

<http://www.lasc.ie/issues/LA-history.html>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_South_America

Our World Our History (Primary School 3rd & 4th class)

This history resource teaches 3rd and 4th class children about the Maya civilisation 200BC to AD900 for the strand unit 'Early Peoples and Ancient Societies – Central and South American Peoples'. This fulfils the aims of the revised history curriculum.

This resource costs €6.

Email dbyrne@Trocaire.ie to order yours!

1492 - Cultural Collision

Genocide

- * The first Europeans arrived in Latin America in 1492 when the native population was about 120 million
- * By 1570 there had been a 90% reduction in the size of the native population due to European diseases, warfare and forced labour
- * Between 1530 and 1870 more than 10 million Africans were brought to the Americas as slaves



Indian Savages?

Mayans

- * Irrigation system supported a large population
- * Mayans had a writing system using hieroglyphics
- * Used accurate calendars and advanced astrology
- * Had advanced numbering system that included the concept of zero

Aztecs

- * Possessed large, central government
- * The capital city, Tenochtitlan, had large pyramid temples, aqueducts for water, and causeways
- * Had schools for learning, and kept accurate records of their history.

Incas

- * Built more than 12,000 miles of roads in South American rainforests
- * Had Temple of the Sun in Cuzco, the capital city, which has survived centuries of earthquakes
- * Used terraced agriculture to prevent hunger across empire
- * Had record keeping system that used coloured, knotted string called Quipas

European justification for invasion?

"The unpeopled countries of America [are] devoid of all civil inhabitants, where there are only savage and brutish men, which range up and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same."

William Bradford, 1617

Changes during colonial era

- * Native civilisations were destroyed through suppression of languages and religion, burning of books, melting of artefacts and destroying of monuments.
- * 1,750 indigenous languages have been lost to date
- * Land, mineral wealth and power went into the hands of Europeans and later their white descendants pushing native peoples to the lowest rung of society
- * Crops from the Americas were brought to Europe (e.g. potato, tomato, peppers, pepper, tobacco, beans, cocoa) and later large commercial plantations were established
- * A new mixed race (*mestizo*) population was created often through the rape of indigenous women by European men
- * Christianisation of indigenous peoples took place, enforced by the Spanish Inquisition

What changed when Latin America became independent in early C19th?

Not much for the majority of people, for many it got worse.

- * First 50 years was chaotic and many countries were run by dictators called *caudillos*
- * Slaves were freed but racism continued and indigenous and blacks marginalised
- * Laws protecting indigenous territories were abolished
- * White descendants of Europeans took control and enriched themselves by selling raw materials to Europe and US (Primary Commodity Exporting)
- * Manufactured goods were imported from Europe and US, no effort to industrialise was made

Exploring Latin American through its Culture

The Latin American reality through its Music

- * Nueva Canción music (Victor Jara, Mercedes Sosa, Inti-Illimani, Pablo Milanés etc.)
- * Salsa of the 1970s (Ruben Blades, Willie Colon etc.)
- * Chicha music of Peru
- * Afro-Latin music (Susana Baca, Eva Ayllon etc.)
- * Lila Downs, singing in Spanish and English about on migration, race, social justice, women's issues and more. www.liladowns.com
- * Read *Culture is our weapon: AfroReggae in the Favelas of Rio* - a book about Grupo Cultural AfroReggae, a Rio-based NGO which seeks to divert favela residents from the path of poverty and violence, through music and an appreciation of black culture. From www.latinamericabureau.org or LASC

The Latin American reality through its Art

- * The Mexican Muralist movement (José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros)
- * Poster art and printmaking in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and among Chicanos (Mexican Americans)
- * Women artists such as Guatemalan painter Isabel Ruiz
- * Nationalist and ethnic themes in Latin American and Latino (US) art

The Latin American reality through its Popular Culture

- * Telenovelas or radio and television soap operas, the number-one form of human entertainment on the planet! www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4842220.stm
- * Samba and carnival (check out the Drogheda Samba Festival www.solo.ie/samba)
- * Popular and community drama (e.g. Augusto Boal & Paulo Freire www.ptoweb.org)

Dance Classes & Clubs

Salsa listings nationwide
www.salsa.afterhours.ie
Dublin Argentine Tango Society.
www.geocities.com/tangoireland
Oficina Da Capoeira 086 8875119

Understanding Latin America through its culture



Víctor Jara was a Chilean folk singer and activist.

His songs were drawn from a combination of traditional folk music and left-wing political activism. He supported the *Unidad Popular* ("Popular Unity") coalition candidate Salvador Allende for the presidency of Chile, taking part in campaigning, volunteer political work, and playing free concerts. After the military coup on 11 September 1973 he was brought to the National Stadium, tortured and killed. His wife, Joan Jara, managed to sneak recordings of Víctor's music out of Chile, which were later copied and distributed worldwide. Joan Jara later wrote an account of Víctor Jara's life and music, titled *Victor: An Unfinished Song*. In September 2003, the Chile Stadium was renamed Víctor Jara Stadium.

In 1990, after Pinochet left power, Sting performed "They Dance Alone" a tribute to the thousands who were "disappeared" by the government of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, at an Amnesty-sponsored concert in Santiago's National Stadium.

In Tune with Brazil

A three-part radio documentary exploring music, migration and marginalisation in Brazil. Made by LASC in partnership with MaSamba and Near FM. Available on CD from LASC

Bands & Acts

- MaSamba, Samba Band www.masamba.com
- Repercussion, Cuban Percussion 086 890 7304
- Jayro Gonzalez, Latin folk singer/guitarist www.jayrogonzalez.com 087 779 0695
- O'Mambo and Origenes, Latin folk bands 086 844 5952
- Candela, Cuban music band 086 608 4032

C20th: From Peron to Pinochet

Nationalism & Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) 1930s - 1970s

- * Until the 1930s raw materials were sold to Europe and the US to earn foreign currency
- * This free-trade model fell apart after the Wall Street Crash (1929) and the Great Depression in the west
- * Repression, economic recession, fewer exports, followed by growing poverty and an increasing social disparity, forced the economies to change
- * Manufactured goods were not available or affordable anymore so it was decided to produce them at home, stimulating and protecting the underdeveloped national industry (import substitution)
- * Growth did take place but there were huge inefficiencies and borrowing from the west
- * A militant working class grew, as did populist governments concerned with welfare of working classes e.g. Peron in Argentina
- * Since 1970s, there has been a return to free market economics (neoliberal globalisation).



Military Dictatorship

- * From 1973 to 1980, military dictatorships took over in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Paraguay and Brazil
- * They were often US backed and justified by the threat of communism
- * Promised to restore stability and improve the economy, but generally only protected the business interests of the upper classes
- * Military used torture, kidnapping, secret prisons and "disappearances"
- * Policy of mass murder in Chile and Argentina - between 15,000 and 30,000 people secretly executed

Liberation Theology  had widespread influence in Latin America at this time. It considered that Christian theology (usually Catholic) implied political activism on behalf of the marginalised, particularly in areas of social justice and human rights.



Revolution

- * 1950s-1980s Latin America Regular Marxist inspired revolts took place but were generally crushed with US help (e.g. Guatemala 1954, Dominican Republic 1965, Grenada 1983)
- * 1959 Cuba Cuban Revolution ousted dictator Batista and socialist state established
- * 1979 Nicaragua Sandinista guerrilla movement overthrew dictator Somoza with popular support in Nicaragua. Health and literacy gains but US backed right-wing paramilitaries, the Contras violently opposed. Over 8000 civilians killed and Sandinistas eventually crushed

Action, Information & Resources

Learning more:

A learning resource on Latin American Revolutions
<http://revolutions.truman.edu/>

Information on 30 years anniversary of military coup in Argentina
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4839896.stm>

US interventions in Latin America:
www.zompist.com/latam.html

Organisations and Action:

Agrupacion de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (AFDD)

is a human rights group which seeks to find out the truth about the disappeared in Chile, and wants to secure justice on their behalf.
www.afdd.cl

Project Disappeared

is a joint project of several human rights organizations and activists with the purpose of recovering and maintaining memory, understanding what happened in Argentina during the "dirty war" and fighting against impunity.
www.desaparecidos.org/arg/eng.html

The Centre for Legal Action on Human Rights, CALDH,

is a high profile Guatemalan organisation working for human rights.
www.caldh.org

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Centre for Human Rights

is a Mexican non-governmental organisation which aims to promote and defend human rights, particularly aiming to assist victims of human rights abuses who are marginalised due to poverty.
www.laneta.apc.org/cdhbcasas

Latin American Links in Ireland

Encuentro Latino community organisation
www.encuentro-latinoamericano.com
Brazilian community association
www.amigosdobrasil.net

Brazilian Association of Gort 091 630 902, bilingual.newsletter@gmail.com
Irish Migration Studies in Latin America
www.irlandeses.org

Links between Brazil and Ireland
www.gogobrazil.com

Mayfield Community Arts centre mural project linking Cork and Nicaragua
www.mayfieldarts.org/newhome



Event organised by Mayfield Arts Centre, Cork, linking Nicaraguan, Colombian and Irish communities through art.

Latin America today: persistant poverty under neoliberal globalisation

The situation today:

Latin America is relatively advanced compared to other developing regions (a high life expectancy at 70 years and highest GNI per capita) but this masks a huge poverty problem. Poverty has remained high even though per capita incomes have increased.

Who is poorest?

Poverty is worse in isolated rural areas and increasingly in urban areas due to migration to city slums. Nicaragua, Honduras, Haiti and Bolivia are the poorest countries and poverty everywhere is closely linked to ethnicity, race and gender.

Causes of poverty:

- * Inequality and exclusion (often resulting in social conflict)
- * Economic growth is not reducing poverty
- * Low government expenditure and high debt services
- * Weak government accountability and responsiveness to the poor
- * Economic model favours local elite and western interests

The Debt Crisis:

- * From the 1960s to the 1980s Latin American countries, often under unaccountable governments, took out cheap loans from the west
- * The money was lent by international financial institutions (IFIs), especially the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
- * Weakened currencies and falling export prices made it very difficult to pay off these loans as interest kept spiralling. Mexico defaulted on its foreign debt in 1982, starting the Latin America debt crisis
- * As a condition of restructuring the loans, the IFIs, force developing countries to reduce public spending on services for the population (austerity measures) and introduce free market or neoliberal economic policies. e.g. water privatisation



1,000

The number of state-owned enterprises that have been sold in Mexico since 1983



'Get rid of them all!' After the economic crisis in Argentina 2001, there has been huge distrust of banks and the IFIs

Has Neoliberal Globalisation Helped Development in Latin America?

- * Health, education and social services are being privatised and receive less state funding. Access to these is less equal
- * Economic growth mostly benefits multinationals and income from exports goes on payment of international debt
- * TransNational Corporations (TNCs), usually not benefiting local people, have more control and are less regulated
- * Environmental degradation is increasing
- * Unemployment is still high and the quality of jobs has worsened
- * Organised labour has been weakened
- * Inflation has been controlled but with price of increased poverty and income inequality

Action, Information & Resources

Organisations and Action (Ireland)

The Debt and Development Coalition Ireland (DDCI) is composed of organisations and individuals who share a deep concern about the injustice of the debt crisis and a commitment to work together for an effective, fair and speedy solution to the crisis. In 2006 DDCI will work on a campaign for true 100% debt cancellation for Bolivia. www.debtireland.org

Comhlámh is the Irish Association of Development workers. As a membership organisation, it educates and campaigns on global issues, with a focus on global trade, global migration and development aid cooperation. www.comhlamh.org

Progressio Ireland is an independent organisation that works for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty. At an international level Progressio supports and supplements the voices of partners to change the systems that perpetuate poverty in the global south.

Organisations and Action (International)

50 Years is enough (US) www.50years.org

Attac www.attac.org

One World www.oneworld.net

World Social Forum http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/index.php?cd_language=2&id_menu=1

South Development www.southdevelopment.org

European Network on Debt and Development www.eurodad.org

Global Policy www.globalpolicy.org/soccon/develop/devthry/poverty/2001/0118gonz.htm

Human Globalisation www.humanglobalization.org/latinam.htm

IFI Watch www.ifwatchnet.org

Make Poverty History www.makepovertyhistory.org

Washington Office on Latin America www.wola.org/economic/cafta.htm

Learning more:

Download a fact sheet on Latin America's Debt and the InterAmerican Development Bank. http://www.jubileeusa.org/take_action/idbd06.pdf

Download 'We are the creditors' – Jubilee South's response to the G8 Debt Proposal. <http://www.jubileesouth.org/upload1/JStatementforg8.pdf>

Read about how the International Financial Institutions force countries to privatise through 'conditionality'. http://paulmason.typepad.com/newsnight/2005/06/conditionality_.html

100% Debt Cancellation?

In 2005, the G8, under pressure from campaigners, agreed a debt deal billed as 100% debt cancellation. It was however limited to debt owed by very poor countries to the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and African Development Fund. Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras, and Nicaragua-the only Latin American countries to have qualified for last summer's G-8 deal - still owe a vast portion of debt to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). In 2006, Bolivia will face an estimated \$344.6 million in total debt service obligations, of which approximately \$126 million, or 36.5 %, is due to the IDB. Bolivia is expected to meet its debt service obligations despite the fact that 63% of the country's population lives below the poverty line, as does 82% of its rural population. It is also being forced to privatise public services with disastrous consequences. Contact the Debt and Development Coalition for news on the campaign on this issue. <http://www.debtireland.org/>

Mother Earth

Pachamama: Mother Earth

Indigenous peoples have a common belief in the sacredness of the earth.

'We believe that the Earth is Mother, and as a good mother she will care for and protect us all.' Arhuaco, Colombia.

However, indigenous people have been historically forced off their land to make way for colonists, ranchers, miners, oil extractors, timber companies and other 'development' projects. 38 indigenous people murdered were murdered in Brazil in 2005, mainly in struggles over land protection.

Development?

"Development aggression" refers to the imposition of so-called 'development projects' and policies without the free, prior and informed consent of those affected, under the rubric of modernization or nation-building.

This process can lead to destruction or loss of ancestral territories and resources, denigration of indigenous worldviews and values and of their political, economic and socio-cultural systems and institutions, ecosystem degradation, displacement, and violent conflicts.

This is often associated with large-scale commercial extraction of minerals, oil and gas, logging, biodiversity, building of mega-hydroelectric dams, highways, chemical-intensive agriculture, industrial forest plantations, designating environmentally protected areas that encroach upon indigenous peoples' lands, among others.

Mother Earth in Crisis

Deforestation - Brazil, the country with the greatest amount of tropical forest in the world, loses more than one percent of its forest annually.

Water Pollution - More than ninety percent of urban and industrial wastewater is released to the environment untreated in Latin America.

Production & Fumigation of Drugs - US-funded fumigation of coca with toxic chemicals and the process of the production of cocaine create significant environmental and health issues.

Mining - Latin America is now the world's most important destination for investment in mining but this is a highly polluting activity, affecting especially Guatemala and Peru.

The Guardians of the earth

If they protect their sacred mountain home, the indigenous of northern Colombia believe they will keep the entire planet in balance. This is, however, getting more and more difficult.

The Kankuamo are one of these groups, descendants of an ancient civilisation, the Tairona, which see themselves as the 'elder brother', and 'the guardians of the earth'. In recent years, 200 Kankuamo have been killed, and at least one in seven been forcibly displaced from their ancestral lands. The reason? On-going civil war and specifically, the fact that the land the Kankuamo are laying claim to is rich in limestone and marble and has potential for 4 hydro-electric dams.



Action, Information & Resources

Join LASC's Kankuamo Support group

LASC invited two members of the Kankuamo group from Northern Colombia to Ireland for Latin America Week 2005. Following this, a Kankuamo support group was set up in Ireland and meets regularly at the LASC offices. To get involved please contact LASC.

<http://www.lasc.ie/activities/law/law2005.html>

Learning more:

Survival International, Protecting Indigenous peoples: www.survival-international.org

Tairona Trust: www.taironatrust.org

Colombian's Sierra Nevada Indigenous: magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0410/feature3/index

Abya Yala Net: This site presents information on Indigenous peoples in Mexico, Central, and South America. www.abayala.nativeweb.org

Information on rainforests and indigenous people living in them. www.rainforestweb.org

Peoples of the World work with indigenous peoples to document their traditional and modern life, sponsor their education and help them adapt to the challenges they face in a changing world. www.peoplesoftheworld.org

The Archive of the Indigenous Languages of Latin America (AILLA) is a digital archive of recordings and texts in and about the indigenous languages of Latin America.

<http://www.ailla.utexas.org/site/welcome.html>

Learning more:

On-line guide to mining in Latin America. www.latinamericapress.org/mining

Organisations and action:

Acción Ecológica (Ecological Action) is an activist organisation which defends environmental rights in Ecuador. They have been working for 20 years to support projects of resistance against activities of extraction of natural resources such as petroleum and minerals. Ricardo Buitron of AE visited Ireland for Latin America Week 2006. www.accionecologica.org

The No Dirty Gold campaign supports the rights of communities to determine their own futures - not to have it decided for them by corporations.

www.nodirtygold.org

Ecovida, a Peruvian NGO working for rights of communities affected by gold mining in Tumbogrande, Peru. LASC worked with Ecovida during Latin America Week 2004. www.ecovida.org

Survival's Stamp It Out campaign aims to challenge racist descriptions, however unwitting, of tribal peoples in the media. <http://www.survival-international.org/stampitout.php>

The campaign for recognition of Ecological Debt, that is, the responsibility that the industrialised countries have for the gradual destruction of the planet caused by their production and consumption patterns:
<http://www.jubileesouth.org/journal/bio.htm>
<http://www.enredeurope.org/principal.htm>
<http://www.foei.org/ecodebt/index.html>

AFRI is a group of committed and creative people who seek to promote debate and influence policy and practice in Ireland and internationally on human rights, peace and justice issues. AFRI are currently campaigning on 'land for people not for profit'
www.afri.buz.org

Sustainable Living in Ireland:

Sustainable Ireland runs courses and festivals on sustainable living in their Cultivate Centre, Temple Bar. www.sustainable.org

EcoUnesco run FETAC courses on Sustainable Development. <http://www.ecounesco.ie/>

People Power

Leanings to the left

Since the early 2000s, left wing and left-leaning governments have been voted in across Latin America. Why are left-wing parties and governments currently stronger in Latin America than anywhere else in the world? Because most of them:

- * offer an alternative to dominant free market policies which haven't delivered
- * promise to do more for the poor
- * challenge US global hegemony and promote Latin American integration



The Indigenous Movement ☺

There is huge diversity within the 400 ethnic groups which make up the 40 million indigenous population in Latin America. One thing they do have in common though is poverty and discrimination. Before 1980, indigenous organizing was largely confined to local communities. They now have unprecedented presence in the region.

- * The first indigenous president, Evo Morales, was voted into power in Bolivia in January 2006
- * In 1994 the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico brought indigenous demands into global focus
- * An indigenous mobilization in Ecuador in 1994 foiled the government's attempt to ram through a neoliberal agrarian reform without any public discussion
- * In Chile, Mapuche indigenous have been in the forefront of opposition to Chile's inclusion in a free trade agreement with the US
- * The constitutions in Colombia and Brazil enshrine a number of indigenous rights, thanks to indigenous efforts
- * A principal demand of indigenous organizations in both Guatemala and Ecuador is the revision of the constitution to recognize those countries as plurinational states



Evo Morales

Social Movements

What are they?

- * Diverse groups organising around ethnic concerns, economic needs and various other campaigns
- * Range from soup kitchens to land movements
- * Generally focus on specific issues rather than class based mobilisation or on political power
- * Now have unprecedented bargaining power in Latin America
- * The Bolivian President, Evo Morales, is the leader of the cocaleros movement, representing coca growers

Why do they exist?

- * growing disillusionment with traditional politicians (impunity, corruption, ignoring needs of poor)
- * social, cultural and human rights are consistently violated in the region
- * it is seen as more effective to take 'direct action' to get needs met
- * movements are seen as response to failures of neoliberal globalization & as a modern version of traditional leftist 'resistance'

Revolts against governments implementing neo-liberal policies:
Ecuador: 2000
Argentina: 2001
Bolivia: 2003

95% of the people in Latin America could soon be governed by left-leaning leaders.

*Micheal McCuaghan,
The Village Magazine,
January 2006*

Action, Information & Resources

Learning more:

Latin American Social Movements

Profiles of Latin America Social Movements on
www.lasc.ie

Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (MST)
www.mstbrazil.org

Articles on left in Venezuela & Latin America
www.redpepper.org.uk

Latin American Indigenous Organisations:

Mapuches (Chile)
<http://www.mapuchene-nation.org/english/frontpage>

Mexican National Indigenous Congress
www.laneta.apc.org/cni (In Spanish)

EZLN The Zapatistas
www.ezln.org.mx (In Spanish)

Indigenous Confederation of Ecuador
www.coniae.org (In Spanish)

Aymara Organisation in Bolivia
<http://www.aymaranet.org/a1bd.html>

Colombian National Indigenous Organisation
<http://www.onic.org.co> (In Spanish)

Latin American alternatives

Alternative Press. www.indymedia.org

World Social Forum.
<http://www.forosocialmundial.org>

Venezuelan run Latin American rival to CNN.
<http://www.telesurtv.net/>

20 percent of Brazil's cars run on ethanol only and
Brazil is beginning to use diesel made out of
vegetable oils.

<http://www.energybulletin.net/5021.html>

Venezuela Support Group Ireland

Launched in Dublin in April 2006.

<http://www.quaresound.com/vsg.html>

Email: <mailto:ivsg@hotmail.com>

Tel: Robert on 0876257521 or Grace on
0861062780

See also:

<http://www.venezuelasolidarity.org.uk/>

The revolution will not be televised

Directed and Photographed by Kim Bartley and Donnacha O'Briain Ireland, 2003 In Spanish with english subtitles.

Two independent filmmakers were inside the Venezuelan presidential palace on April 11, 2002, when Chavez was forcibly removed from office. They were also present 48 hours later when, remarkably, he returned to power amid cheering aides. Their film records what was probably history's shortest-lived coup d'état.

To order a copy:

http://www.venezuelasolidarity.org.uk/ven/web/2006/documentaries/venezuela_documentaries.html

For more information:

http://www.chavezthefilm.com/index_ex.htm

Tools for change

is a linked archive of resources whose common theme is that they are all about change: social movements from below challenging structural relationships, spiritual practices geared towards transforming ourselves and our interaction with others, and attempts at radical educational practice of various kinds.

<http://www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange/>

“Free” Trade

Neoliberalism is implemented through various means including international organizations, (IMF, World Bank, WTO), debt, military force and trade agreements (NAFTA, FTAA, etc.).

Here is some information about trade agreements currently affecting Latin America

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

What? A controversial free trade agreement

Who? Links Canada, the United States and Mexico

When? Went into effect in 1994

Consequences?

Firstly, NAFTA's approval was followed by an uprising amongst indigenous people led by the Zapatistas
Transnational corporations have increased profits due to lower tariffs and labour costs
Thousands of Mexicans are now working in sweatshops
Many Mexican farmers, especially maize farmers, have become bankrupt due to cheap subsidised US agricultural imports

Plan Puebla Panama (PPP)

What? 25-year plan to develop transport and energy infrastructure

Where? Nine southern states of Mexico and the countries of Central America

When? Some projects have already started

Why? To make it easier for large transnational corporations (TNCs) to invest in a region that is rich in oil, mineral deposits, timber, tourism sites and biodiversity.

Who is behind it? Funding is by the Mexican state, the Inter-American Development Bank for Mexico and Central America

What consequences? Environmental destruction, social breakdown, loss of indigenous lands

Who will benefit? Mainly the TNCs who will be able to exploit available natural resources, biodiversity and cheap labour. Resources will be easily shipped out (it is the narrowest part of the Americas, making it a natural corridor for east-west trade)



Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA/ALCA)

The FTAA (ALCA in Spanish) is a proposed agreement among all nations in the Western Hemisphere except Cuba to eliminate or reduce trade barriers. It was due to come into effect in 2005 but has been stalled due to Latin American governments, under strong popular pressure, pushing for equal footing. Smaller agreements are instead being pursued by the US, such as the CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) and the AFTA, (the Andean Free Trade Agreement).

Dominican Republic - Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA)

Seen as NAFTA extended to Central America and a potential precursor to an FFTA or PPP agreement. Originally, the agreement encompassed the United States and the Central American countries of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, and was called CAFTA. In 2004, the Dominican Republic joined the negotiations, and the agreement was renamed DR-CAFTA.

Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA)

The AFTA negotiations, which were originally scheduled to be finished by the end of 2004, are stalled because of continuing disagreements between the United States and Andean nations about several issues, including Andean countries' opposition to intellectual property protection rules that would raise medicine prices, NAFTA-style investment rules that limit countries' sovereignty, and reductions of agricultural tariffs that could lead to a massive displacement of small farmers.

Action, Information & Resources

Organisations and Action (International):

FTAA Resistance:

<http://ftaaresistance.org/index.php>

Stop CAFTA

<http://www.stopcafta.org/>

No PPP is a network of Northern organizations working to stop the Plan Puebla Panama (PPP) and the model of corporate globalization behind it. Our members seek direction from grassroots organizations and anti-PPP movements in the region of Mexico and Central America. To join the PPP informational listserve e-mail acerca@sover.net

For more on NoPPP go to <http://www.asej.org>

Global Exchange is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world
<http://www.globalexchange.org/countries/americas/mexico/ppp/318.html>

Fair Trade Mark Ireland promotes fairtrade awareness and consumption
<http://www.fairtrade.ie>

Learning More:

PPP Booklet – an educational resource to help mobilize people to join together in opposition to PPP. It contains 18 short articles from organizations in five countries outlining the social and environmental impacts of the plan as well as grassroots alternatives. (48 pages, 2002)
<http://store.gxonlinestore.org/pueblapanama.html>

Action and Organisations (Ireland):

Comhlámh Trade Justice Group

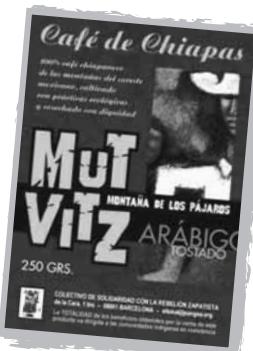
The Comhlámh Trade Justice Group of volunteer members has been working for Trade Justice since 1998. The group focuses on raising awareness of how unfair trade rules prevent the poorest countries from finding their way out of poverty. The Trade Justice Group welcomes new members who wish to join in learning more about and campaigning for trade justice. To find out more about the group, when it is next meeting and how you can help in its work, contact Conall O'Caoimh at conalloc@comhlamh.org or phone 01-478-3490. The Trade Group meets every second Tuesday at Comhlámh's Dublin office, and a similar group meets at the Cork office.

Trade Justice Ireland

Trade could play a role in reducing poverty if world leaders rewrite the rules to benefit the poor rather than the rich so that trade will work for everyone. Trade Justice Ireland is a coalition of Development NGOs and Trade Unions campaigning for fundamental changes to world trade rules to end the injustice of the current trading system. www.tradejustice.ie

Mut Vitz (Bird Mountain) Coffee Cooperative

"Our cooperative was formed through the efforts of 6 municipalities in the Highland region of Chiapas. We are indigenous Tzotzil, Tzeltal and Zoque peoples, from communities in resistance. We produce organic coffee, both strictly high bean (S.H.B) and high bean. For years, we knew little about selling our coffee, and the coyotes, or middlemen, who do the least work in the entire process of coffee production, took all of the benefits. Now we are organized and we have realized that we can be in charge of the entire process, from production of coffee from our own plants to exportation and direct sales to the consumer. We have also been working to improve the ecology of our coffee fields, producing organically. With the coffee cooperative as an example, we hope to look for other alternatives and encourage more projects that can generate needed funds for other projects in our communities." Available at LASC €4.50/bag Contact: mutvitz@laneta.apc.org



Hard Work

Things not working!

Since the early 1990s we have seen.....

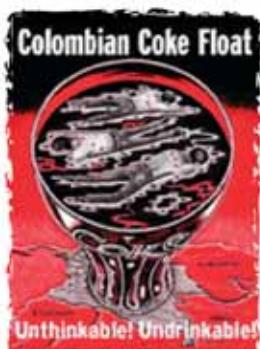
- * high levels of unemployment
- * a decline in the quality of employment (e.g. working without contract)
- * a fall in real wages
- * a reduction in the productivity of the labour force
- * fewer workers (now only one third) have access to social security
- * jobless are mainly the less affluent, women and youth

Maquiladoras (assembly for export plants)

- * Huge boom in maquiladoras across Latin America, and in particular, Mexico since NAFTA in 1994
- * Why? Tax incentives, cheap labour force, and soft labour and environmental policies have attracted foreign corporations
- * Workers in maquiladoras, usually women, are subject to low pay and hazardous working conditions and often sexual harassment by supervisors, termination due to pregnancy, and other gender-based discrimination

Trade Unionists in Colombia

- * In 2003, more than 270 trade unions were murdered in Colombia
- * Right wing paramilitary groups are mainly responsible
- * Impunity abounds, the government has done little to tackle paramilitaries
- * A boycott has been launched against Coca Cola due to murders of unionists at their bottling plants in Colombia



Sweatshop Story

'I know what it is like to work.

I began filling bottles at the shampoo factory when I was 13,

and I am 15 now with a better job in a maquila. Now I make at least \$60 every two weeks, up to \$66. This work is not easy, but I keep my mouth shut because I need this job. The starting bell rings at 6:15. I have to work fast – we have quotas. When the lunch bell rings at 12, you have to hope the food is clean and hot because the doors are locked and you are not allowed to leave. And you have to hope it doesn't make you want to go to the bathroom, because if you ask permission more than a couple of times a day, you get reprimanded. There are no morning or afternoon breaks. When the bell finally rings at 6:30 p.m., you are ready to go home – but it is not always possible. If there is more work, the owners tell you they need people to stay for the night shift. If not enough people say yes, the supervisor sits in front of the doors and no one can leave.'



Myra Esperanza Mejia, Guatemala City, 1997

Mini-Brazil in Gort

As the US tighten visa controls, more Latin Americans are migrating to Europe. In Ireland, many Brazilian migrants are working in the meat processing industry, bringing financial benefits and also some problems of exploitation and isolation. Gort, Co. Galway, however, has become "samba city", with a quarter of its residents now hailing from Brazil.

Integration has been largely successful and two-way, and "Most of the Irish people say 'good morning', 'goodbye' and 'thank you' in Brazilian. A lot of Irish people are learning the Brazilian dance and we cook Brazilian dishes for them as well."

Information: Frank Murray
fjmurray@hotmail.com

Action, Information & Resources

Action on Colombia:

LASC Colombia Solidarity Group

A group of about 16-20 activists who usually meet every second Wednesday at 7:30 in LASC. The group aim to raise awareness of the situation in Colombia and give solidarity to workers there, e.g. through Coca Cola boycott.

Contact: columbiasolidarityirl@yahoo.ie

ICTUR Colombia Bulletin

Sign up to receive it every two weeks by email – visit www.ictur.org for information.

UK Colombia Solidarity Organisation:

<http://www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk/>

Peace Communities

San Jose de Apartado is the first peace community to be set up in Colombia. Two members of the community visited Ireland in August 2005. To support the community contact Cearbhui on 086 0554665.

<http://www.peaceincolombia.org>

Justice for Colombia

(JFC) is a coalition of British organisations working in support of the Colombian people and trade union movement in their campaign for basic human rights and their struggle for peace with social justice.

<http://www.justiceforcolombia.org>

Learn More:

New ICTU Global Solidarity Guide to Workers' Rights and Free Trade - action for change <http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org/uploads/action%20for%20change.pdf>

International Labour Organisation
<http://www.ilo.org/>

Organisations and Action:

Boycott Coca Cola

Unionists in Coca Cola bottling plans in Colombia have been murdered and tortured. The Colombian food and drinks workers union, Sinantrinal, is suing Coca Cola because of their involvement in these attacks. An international boycott against Coca Cola is taking place in support of the union.

www.killercoke.org

Action on Workers' Rights

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Global Solidarity Project focuses on what are known as the 'core labour standards' of the International Labour Organisation which protect basic workers' rights worldwide.

<http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org/DesktopDefault.aspx>

No Sweat Clothes

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has launched a new range of anti-sweatshop, exploitation-free clothing in Ireland. Congress has teamed up with the Boston-based company, No Sweat, to allow Irish consumers purchase No Sweat goods through the Congress website. www.ictu.ie

Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)

A Canadian labour and women's rights advocacy organization promoting solidarity with grassroots groups in Mexico, Central America, and Asia working to improve conditions in maquiladora factories and export processing zones.

<http://www.maquilasolidarity.org>

Cesesma

CESESMA, the Centre for Education in Health and Environment, works in the three districts of northern Nicaragua with the greatest dependence on coffee production and thus the greatest incidence of child labour and the associated social problems.

www.cesesma.org

Health is Wealth

The strongest determinants of health are not physical but social, political, economic and cultural forces. Health is not only the absence of disease or infirmity, but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being.

Carmelita, Nicaragua

Three years ago, the area around Carmelita's village on the North Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua became the site of a logging project. A large tract of land that villagers relied on for hunting and fishing was taken over by the loggers. The medicinal plants that villagers had used to treat injury and illness were deep in the forest that now "belonged" to the timber company. Pollutants from the project contaminated the river, killing the fish and river plants that had been a mainstay of the community's diet. Within one year, Carmelita and her children began showing signs of malnutrition.

Cristina, Guatemala City

Working long hours in a dirty, high-stress maquila (sweatshop) and living in an overcrowded slum, she contracted tuberculosis. Because of hospital "user fees" and a rise in the cost of pharmaceuticals, Cristina did not have enough money to pay for medicine. She had no choice but to continue her work at the maquila, and her condition has steadily worsened.

Villagers of Choropampa, Peru

On 2 June 2000, a truck carrying mercury from South America's largest gold mine spilled some of its load, and turned Choropampa into an environmental disaster. Five years later, the residents of this Andean village say they are still suffering the effects of mercury poisoning. Many are involved in legal disputes with US mining company Newmont, the main stakeholder in the Yanacocha mine.

Health Strikes

In 2003 public health workers held 37 national work stoppages in 12 countries of Latin America, highlighting the grave crises plaguing health systems that have few prospects of recovery. (PAHO)



Culturally appropriate healthcare

Indigenous peoples over the last five hundred years have had various aspects of western culture forced on them. There is deep distrust of modern medicine by the indigenous people in the high Andes of Peru for example, primarily because people feel the health centre workers treat them disrespectfully. The obvious answer - providing training to traditional midwives so that traditional home births can be done safely - has been resisted by the health ministries to date. There is a real need to combine the best of what traditional and western approaches can offer, on the basis of mutual respect.

Threats to health in Latin America

Lack of Access to Drugs

Drugs are too expensive for the poor. Generic drugs would be cheaper but pharmaceutical transnationals are against them.

Worsening Health Care Systems

Structural adjustment programmes mean a reduction in public spending. Health care and education spending are the first to be hit, leading to the privatisation of health care systems.

Environmental Destruction

Seepage, routine dumping and mining endanger water supplies. This makes entire rivers and ecosystems unsafe. All forms of pollution affect health of local people.

Dangerous Working Conditions

As jobs become more informal and labour regulations are eroded, workers' health suffers.

Paying for Traditional Cures

The medicinal plants millions of Latin Americans use every day may become the property of transnationals. In Brazil, which has some of the richest biodiversity in the world, large transnational corporations have already patented more than half the known plant species.

Action, Information & Resources

Organisations and Action:

People's Health Movement

is a worldwide movement which calls for a revitalisation of the principles of the Alma-Ata Declaration which promised Health for All by the year 2000 and complete revision of international and domestic policy that has shown to impact negatively on health status and systems.
www.phmovement.org

The Politics of Health Knowledge Network
is a forum for the exploration of the impact of political decisions on health. They are concerned with how politics affect health on all levels – from individual organisms, to social groups, to the earth as a total ecological system.
www.politicsofhealth.org

The Institute of Public Health

in Ireland works to tackle inequalities in health across the island of Ireland.
www.publichealth.ie

Action:

Médecins Sans Frontière's Access to Essential Medicines Campaign. www.accessmed-msf.org

Oxfam has teamed up with other non-governmental organizations for its Cut the Cost Campaign.
http://www.oxfam.org.uk/about_us/thisisoxfam/healthy/case_study.htm

Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration Combating patenting of genetic forms for profit, the ETC group is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable advancement of cultural and ecological diversity and human rights. www.etcgroup.org

Corporate research groups often provide invaluable information on Big Pharma's influence and lobbying. Corporate Watch
www.corporatewatch.org

Multinational Monitor
www.multinationalmonitor.org

Corporate Europe Observatory
<http://www.corporateeurope.org>

Medact is a UK-based charity taking action on key global health issues such as war on Iraq, collapsing health systems in Africa, and global climate change. www.medact.org

Learn More:

New International Magazine(Nov 2003 edition of the magazine) www.newint.org

Trading Away Resource guide on Health and Free Trade
<http://www.accessmed-msf.org/documents/FTAAdoc.pdf>

Excellent teaching resource on Globalisation and Health
<http://www.medact.org/content/Extra%20online%20unit%20%20Globalisation%20and%20health.pdf>

Fascinating article on health by Ival Illich
<http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM17/Health.html>