

# opinion

Column/Simson L. Garfinkel

## Serving exile in the Big Apple

NEW YORK —By the waters of the Hudson I laid down and wept. I remembered Cambridge.

For the past four months, I have been living in exile in the Big Apple. I didn't choose to live in New York; I chose to go to graduate school at Columbia University. I knew the city would be bad. I didn't know it would be hell.

I didn't get university housing. Priority in the Columbia graduate housing system is based on how far you live from New York when you apply — the farther you live, the higher your priority. Boston just doesn't cut it. I have friends from Colorado who didn't get housing.

My first month, I lived in the sublet den of a 42-year old cocaine dealer at 96th and West End Avenue. She had dropped out of college in the 1960s to explore the world. She had since been divorced four times. The woman charged me \$550 a month rent for the room. There was another student whom she charged the same.

She didn't need to work, since she only paid \$300 a month for

her 6-room, rent-controlled apartment. New York is like that.

I didn't have a lease. When I told her I was moving out, she had her lawyer call me up and threaten a lawsuit. New York is like that too. I'm told that such landlord-tenant relations are typical in the city.

On my way home each night, three or four people would ask me for money. New York has nearly 100,000 homeless people and nearly an equal number of vacant apartments owned by the city. New York has always been a city of excess.

When a slum lord fails to pay taxes and the city takes possession of an apartment building, it bricks up the windows, tears out the plumbing and the electrical system and does its best to make the building uninhabitable. Ostensibly, the practice keeps drug addicts from using the building. It also keeps the homeless from squatting.

Can't have the homeless living in abandoned apartments when the city is spending millions of dollars on shelters.

This in a city that gives hun-

dreds of millions of dollars in tax credits to builders of office buildings and luxury condominiums.

A friend was looking for a two-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn, so I moved in with her. The apartment is in Prospect Heights, a community in the process of gentrification — meaning that the poor people are getting pushed out for the rich professionals, of which I am considered one.

A block east, the rent on my apartment would be \$1500 a month. A block west, ghetto children smoke crack in abandoned lots and on the steps of broken-

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Columns and editorial cartoons are written by individuals and represent the opinion of the author, not necessarily that of the newspaper.

Letters to the Editor are welcome. They must be typed double spaced and addressed to The Tech, PO Box 29, MIT Branch, Cambridge MA 02139, or by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483.

Letters and cartoons must bear the authors' signatures, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. No letter or cartoon will be printed anonymously without express prior approval of The Tech. The Tech reserves the right to edit or condense letters. Shorter letters will be given higher priority. We regret we cannot publish all of the letters we receive.

## feedback

## Take police powers away from MIT

(Editor's note: The Tech received a copy of this letter addressed to the Cambridge City Council.)

To the Honorable Council:

I've been reading with interest accounts of the latest MIT police action against non-violent protesters at the recent "Tent City" roundup. Once again MIT has demonstrated that it does not have the institutional maturity to properly be entrusted with broad police powers.

Only last year, in the spring of 1986, MIT arrested eight students in another unannounced early morning raid — this time on a South African divestment shantytown protest. Those arrests came suddenly, without proximate provocation, and in the context of MIT's refusal to negotiate with the protesters. Given MIT's lack of good faith in that episode (which was roundly criticized by a faculty resolution), the current fiasco should not come as too much of a surprise.

While MIT claims that the people arrested at Tent City had urged the residents to stay, this claim is contradicted by all the testimony of those arrested, who indicated a desire to help the homeless leave peaceably. It is also contradicted by the Chief of the Cambridge police, Anthony G. Paolillo. Paolillo is quoted in *The New York Times* as stating that "[The residents] indicated to

me that they'd walk if asked" and also that when he arrived at the site Friday morning, "people were packing and at some point the MIT police decided to make arrests — I have no idea why."

This is at least the second time in two years that MIT has misused its police powers and embarrassed itself (not to mention the Cambridge police force which is inevitably dragged into MIT's blunders).

MIT derives its police powers from a special legislative edict

and I think it's high time that the scope of that edict be reconsidered. In particular, it has become clear that MIT does not know how to deal with non-violent political protests (much less what to make of them) and its power to arrest in such situations should be removed. As a former victim of those powers (arrested taking pictures at the shantytown, acquitted after trial), I urge you to take action in this direction.

Larry Kolodney '85

## Contras have not yet shown independence from US support

To the Editor:

Jeff Meredith G should be applauded for his effort to bring "balance" to *The Tech's* coverage of Nicaraguan issues ["Nicaragua's 'reporter's notebook' series biased," Dec. 1]. I also applaud *The Tech* for its continuing efforts to bring such important issues to the attention of the MIT community. Unfortunately, Meredith is right to say that such efforts are often marked by a certain bias.

However, I must take issue with Meredith over the subject of US sponsorship of the *contras*. Meredith states that all guerrilla armies have benefitted crucially

from significant external support, and that the *contras* are in no way exceptional. He specifically cites the Vietnamese, Cuban, Chinese, and Afghan guerrillas.

A little history is in order here. The Cuban revolution of 1959 was conducted with no outside aid whatsoever.

The Communist Chinese victory of 1949 was won not with a guerrilla war, but with conventional tactics, and with very little in the way of Soviet help. Earlier, Mao had indeed waged a guerrilla struggle against the Japanese occupation of 1937-45; he relied entirely on captured Japanese

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# The Tech

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# opinion

## Fear and rent in New York

(Continued from page 4)  
down brownstones. Brownstones that the city bricked up to keep out the drug addicts.

I feel safe at night, behind my double-locked front doors. A month ago, an off-duty police officer was shot while buying drugs, but that happened four blocks away. A block is a long distance in this city where the very rich live next to the very poor. There is no crime on my block.

Each day, I leave for school on a 7 am subway. The ride takes about 45 minutes. To save time, I eat at school. If I took the extra 15 minutes to break my fast at home, the subway ride would take an hour, perhaps more. The subway slows down as the morning rush hour progresses. The press of bodies doesn't let up until 10 am.

I'm lucky; other students in my class have a 90-minute commute from Staten Island. My advisor comes from New Jersey — it takes him nearly two hours some days. Nor is he untypical: Manhattan is to New Jersey what Boston is to Somerville. Daily commutes from Connecticut or northern Pennsylvania are common.

New York is not "my kind of town." It smells. The city cleans the streets three times a week and they overflow with trash and grime. Delivery trucks block

three lanes of traffic and hold up busses because service alleys are non-existent.

Four years ago, a friend and I drove from MIT to the city. Thirty miles out, I asked him about the dome of red haze that seemed to blanket the skyscrapers. "That's from the cars," he said. "You mean we're going to be breathing that?" I asked.

I've developed a cough from the dirt and chemicals in the air. A month ago, the EPA announced that it was rolling back the deadline for New York (and several other cities) to comply with the Clean Air Act. But cars are only part of the problem. This is a city where nearly everybody smokes. Sometimes the smoke is as bad on the streets as it is indoors. And then there are the special New York hazards. I spent an afternoon talking to a subway cop: he said the metal dust in the air from the trains turns his snot black.

Perhaps New York has more subway problems than most other cities because New York has the largest city subway system. The New York subways represent 10 percent of the world subway market. Nothing else even comes close.

Everything in New York costs money except the subway maps, but booths are always out of them. Get caught in traffic, some-

body is sure to spray dirty water on your windshield and make you pay to have him clean it off. Telephone calls cost a quarter, bus and subway a dollar. Unlike the MBTA, New York's MTA (Mass Transit Authority) doesn't offer any discount programs or monthly passes. I once asked an MTA employee why. "People would use them too much," he said.

Drugs are everywhere. Crack is the city's number one problem. A police officer told me that 70 percent of the city's crime is directly traceable to drugs.

This week my roommate told me she's moving back to Seattle. "Brooklyn reminds me of everything about my parents that I hate," she said. Now I am faced with the dilemma of finding another roommate in a city of strangers or carrying rent for the two-bedroom on my own.

I want to come home. I want to come back to Cambridge.

Oh Cambridge, if I forget thee, may my eyes go blind, may my right hand turn black and fall off. Oh Cambridge, I didn't realize that you were heaven-on-earth until I spent a year living in New York.

*Simson L. Garfinkel '87 is studying at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. He is a former contributing editor of The Tech.*

## What if *contras* lose US support?

(Continued from page 4)  
arms.

Similarly, the guerrilla phase of the Vietnamese war of independence against France (1946-54) was fought largely, but not completely, without external help. This was even more true of the Viet Cong insurgency of South Vietnam until 1968; only after the Tet offensive of that year did the North Vietnamese army shoulder a major burden of the war against the United States and South Vietnam.

Finally, it took years for the United States to put together a significant weapons pipeline to the Afghan *mujahedin*, during which time they more than held their own against the Soviets. Furthermore, the pipeline reaches only guerrillas based in Pakistan. Even to this day, the brunt of the resistance is borne by guerrillas based inside Afghanistan and not in a position to benefit greatly from the Pentagon's much vaunted Stinger missiles.

Each of these guerrilla movements was indigenous in origin, organization, and membership. While most subsequently received at least some external support, they retained their indigenous character and were in no way

"sponsored" by their respective benefactors. They can be contrasted sharply with the *contra* forces, which were originally organized and are still funded by the United States. The *contras* have been so dependent on US aid for their continuing viability that "sponsorship" might not be an inaccurate term.

One should be careful when making sweeping generalizations about guerrilla movements. The *mujahedin* and the *contras* are clearly different. I suggest that

one major difference is that the Afghans have proven that they can fight and even flourish against overwhelming odds, and that they can do it alone. Perhaps we should subject the *contras* to the same test.

Alan Kuo G



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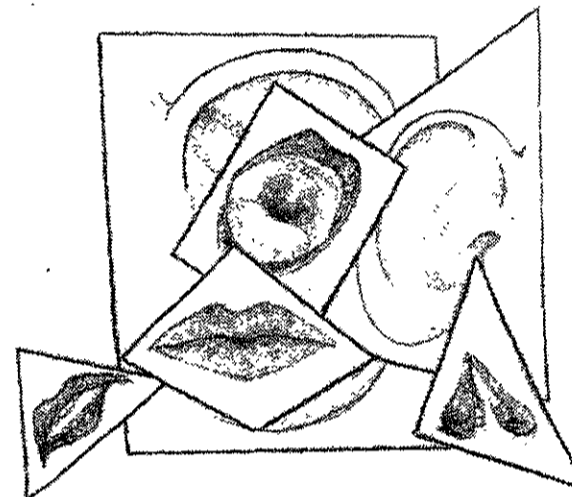
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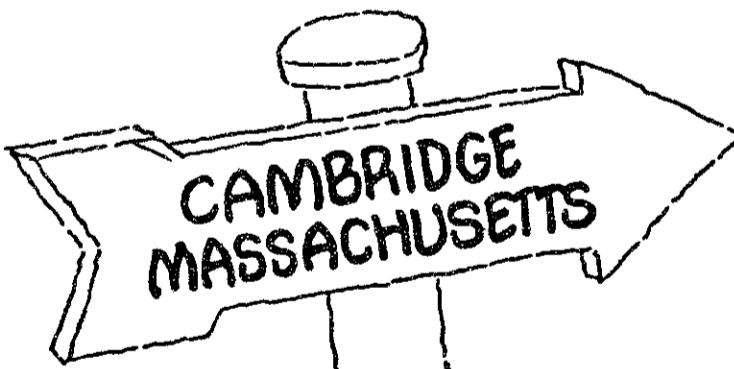
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