

ISSUES AND POLICY

In the course of the past year, events in El Salvador have propelled that country from an insignificant position in world politics to the forefront of U.S. foreign policy. False analogies abound: another Cuba, another Nicaragua, another Vietnam. Meanwhile, the overdue process of social change in El Salvador has

Reform, Repression, and Revolution in El Salvador

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assumed international proportions and the destiny of the people of El Salvador has become subject to external political conflicts beyond their control or concern. This article will examine the political background of El Salvador's incipient revolutionary situation and will critique the U.S. foreign policy reaction to instability in El Salvador. It will conclude by proposing an alternative U.S. policy which would be more responsive and sensitive to El Salvador's acute internal political and socio-economic problems.

The Carter Administration based its support of the junta in El Salvador upon several misperceptions which have been adopted and extended by the Reagan Administration. These include, 1) the belief that the ruling junta occupies a centrist position in the political spectrum, 2) the commitment of the junta to effective socio-economic reforms, and 3) the exaggerated degree of foreign involvement in the revolutionary process. In actuality, the ruling junta has steadily shifted to the right of the political spectrum since its inception in October 1979, undermining the assumption made by both the Carter and the Reagan Administrations that the junta represents a political center confronted with political violence from both the extreme right and the extreme left. Further, the land reform program, the symbol of socio-economic reform upon which U.S. support was predicated, is little more than an illusion perpetuated

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to gain political support for the junta. Finally, external involvement in the revolutionary process, while extensively documented in the now celebrated State Department White Paper on Communist Interference in El Salvador,¹ does not constitute the external command and control of the Salvadoran leftist movement alleged by Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and cannot convincingly be construed as a precursor to the subversion of other Central American governments as part of a "born-again" domino theory. The misperceptions of the U.S. government will be examined and refuted below through a different, more accurate presentation of these issues. The following description of Salvadoran political reality will substantially weaken the present justification for U.S. support of the current junta. This will be complemented with an alternative set of policies, which could, if implemented, further U.S. long-term foreign policy interests in Latin America and assist in the restoration of political stability in El Salvador.

The Misperception of the Centrist Junta

In the aftermath of the Sandinista revolutionary triumph in Nicaragua in July 1979, U.S. attention shifted to El Salvador, then viewed as the next most vulnerable military regime in Central America. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs William Bowdler was dispatched to persuade President Carlos Humberto Romero to begin the process of necessary socio-economic reforms. President Romero, who had resorted to blatant electoral fraud to secure the presidency in 1977, remained impervious to political pressures and even to such warnings as the assassination of his brother in September 1979. As a result, he was overthrown in a bloodless military coup on October 15, 1979 by a group of young military officers whose leader, Col. Adolfo Majano, was steadfastly committed to far-reaching structural reforms. The U.S. evidently had prior knowledge of the coup and welcomed the change in government.

A new governing junta was quickly formed with Col. Majano at its head. The four other members of the junta were Col. Jaime Abdul Gutierrez, a more conservative officer, Guillermo Manuel Ungo, a reformer and leader of the Social Democratic Party (MNR), and Roman Quiros and Mario Andino, reform-minded civilians representing academic and private sector groups. The new junta immediately promised to undertake structural reforms of the Salvadoran society, economy, and government. Specifically, the junta declared its intention to initiate land reform, normalize relations with Cuba and Nicaragua, and appeal to the leftist guerillas for a cease-fire.

The mixed initial reception accorded to the junta indicated its position at the

1. The State Department White Paper, "Communist Interference in El Salvador," Special Report No. 80 (Washington, D.C., 23 February 1981).

center of the Salvadoran political spectrum. Rightist groups within the oligarchy viewed the new junta as a threat to their security, with some elements reportedly offering \$20 million to any group that could restore the country to obligarchic control. On the other hand, certain leftist guerrilla groups responded positively to the junta's call for a cease-fire. The influential Archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was later assassinated, buttressed the junta's call for a cease-fire by advocating an interim period to allow the junta to prove that "its beautiful promises are not dead letters but rather a real hope that a new era begins for our country."² Archbishop Romero's fears were soon realized. Promised reforms were not rapidly implemented, violence intensified, and the political situation deteriorated throughout the remainder of 1979.

At this point, the Carter Administration decided to openly support the junta, which was besieged by demands and accusations from both the left and the right. In pursuing this policy, however, the Carter Administration neglected to consider whether U.S. support might strengthen rightist elements in the junta, and thus weaken the junta's credibility as a force that could reconcile different elements in the country. Support for the fledgling centrist junta included direct and indirect foreign assistance, as well as a \$5.7 million package of "non-lethal" military equipment.³ This supportive policy continued despite mass resignations in December 1979. The three civilian junta members and 39 cabinet ministers and other leading government officials quit in protest over growing rightist influence and lack of their own power to enact meaningful reforms. Specifically, the departing junta members had called for the ouster of Defense Minister José Guillermo García, the leading rightist in the government. Backed by rightist elements in the military, García remained in power.

Soon thereafter, Archbishop Romero, the spiritual conscience of El Salvador, withdrew his support from the junta. This was a crucial turning point and marked the end of the moderates' attempted rapprochement with the junta. In his January 6th sermon, Romero declared that the junta had been manipulated by the oligarchy and had reneged upon its promised socio-economic reforms. He also issued a cryptic warning that the time for the legitimate use of violence was approaching.⁴

The mass resignations signaled the first firm step in the junta's progression towards the right. As a countervailing measure, the junta needed a measure of legitimacy which could demonstrate its centrist credentials. José Napoleón

2. "A Coup against Chaos," *Time*, 29 October 1979, p. 59.

3. The American Friends Service Committee has identified the "non-lethal" equipment in the article "Aid for El Salvador is Called Non-Lethal," *New York Times*, 15 June 1980. It includes tear gas grenades, grenade launchers, night vision instruments, image intensifiers, and other riot control and counterinsurgency equipment.

4. *Los Angeles Times*, 7 January 1980.

Duarte, the leader of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), who had been denied a presidential victory in the 1972 elections by the military, agreed to assist in the formation of a new junta. Two other PDC leaders, Hector Dada Hirezi and José Antonio Morales Ehrlich, were appointed as civilian members of the junta, along with a politically obscure independent, Dr. Ramón Avalos Navarrete. Participation by the PDC was crucial to the continued perception of the junta as a centrist force. A refusal by the PDC to participate would have left the military without civilian support and would have destroyed the attempt to portray the junta as reform-oriented.

Dissent within the junta soon became apparent as it proved unable to cope with rising political violence. On January 22, 1980, rightist snipers opened fire on a crowd of over 100,000 demonstrators gathered in San Salvador to protest the inability of the junta to implement meaningful reforms. This was the largest political demonstration in El Salvador's history, and was indicative of the growing popular discontent with the policies of the junta. Still another significant episode of political violence was the occupation of the PDC headquarters by leftists protesting PDC cooperation with the military in the junta. The PDC assured the leftist occupiers that they would not be attacked, yet despite this assurance, police stormed the headquarters killing several of the leftists. This event clearly demonstrated the political impotence of the PDC, ostensibly a participant in the government, yet incapable of restraining the police from attacking its own party headquarters.

In the midst of declining Christian Democratic influence in junta decision-making, the U.S. announced a \$50 million aid package, including an additional \$5 million for "non-lethal" military equipment. The military assistance program met with strong criticism from Archbishop Romero and Guillermo Manuel Ungo, a former member of the junta. The *New York Times* summarized the opposition to the decision by stating,

If peaceful evolution is still possible reformers will have to regain power from the military hard-liners. That is why American military aid at this point would signal aid for the wrong faction.⁵

Emboldened by the show of support from the Carter Administration, the military members of the junta overruled the opposition of the PDC to the military assistance program. Simultaneously, rightist paramilitary groups began a terrorist offensive directed at the PDC to further weaken their position in the junta and to encourage rightists in the military to remove the PDC from power altogether. Mario Zamora Rivas, the Attorney General and a PDC member, was assassinated later in February, and Napoleón Duarte accused rightists both for Zamora's death and for attacks on the other PDC members. The right's

5. "What El Salvador Needs," *New York Times*, 24 February 1980.

desire for control of the junta reached a peak at the end of February, 1980. Rumors of an impending coup by rightist military officers prompted the U.S., through Ambassador Robert White, to publicly and privately warn the military and leading rightists not to attempt a coup. The planned coup was prevented, although rightist influence in the junta expanded by default.

One of the two PDC members of the junta, Hector Dada Hirezi, resigned on the eve of the announcement of the land reform program on March 6, 1980. Several other prominent PDC members in the government followed his lead. Dada's resignation was apparently motivated by his belief that a land reform program coupled with a continuation of repression was an internally contradictory policy. Napoleón Duarte, the most popular PDC politician, became Dada's replacement. Duarte joined the junta with certain misgivings, as he had hoped to run for president in the future and feared being held personally responsible for the failings of the junta. Furthermore, Duarte joined the junta despite its failure to fulfill the conditions he had set in January 1980 for PDC participation. The security forces had not been reorganized, a dialogue with the left had not been opened, and the PDC was now forced to seek support from the private sector. Duarte's decision to join the junta confirmed a schism in the PDC between reform-oriented PDC members, who could not tolerate the hypocrisy of the reform with repression policies of the junta and those aligned with the government. The PDC therefore became divided between a Christian Socialist wing (MPSC), which joined the opposition, and a more conservative wing which continued to support Duarte.

Duarte's decision to join the junta met with even more acerbic criticism from Guillermo Manuel Ungo, his former vice-presidential running mate in 1972. Ungo explained Duarte's decision by suggesting that,

Duarte's personal obsession for power and his primitive anti-communism have all come out. He was willing to ally himself totally with the army and the oligarchy.⁶

PDC support for the "reform with repression" policy formula and the sacrifice of the original preconditions under which it agreed to participate in the junta signified another shift to the right. A significant further shift was taken following the tragic assassination of Archbishop Romero as he celebrated Mass in April 1980. In an attempt to justify further escalation of repressive tactics, members of the military informed the junta that Romero's assassination marked the beginning of a civil war. Moderate members of the junta were unwilling to endorse these repressive measures, and the failure to prevent their implementation led to the resignations of the Ministers of Economy, Agricul-

6. Raymond Bonner, "The Agony of El Salvador," in *New York Times Magazine*, 22 February 1981, p. 40.

ture, and Education. These resignations silenced still more moderate voices in the government and correspondingly elevated the rightist influence of Defense Minister José Guillermo García and National Guard Commander Eugenio Vides Casanova.

By the spring of 1980 the junta had been stripped of its centrist disguise. As more conclusive evidence of collaboration between the military and the rightist paramilitary death squads began to appear in the media, it became increasingly difficult for Washington to maintain the disingenuous pretense that the junta was a centrist force. Convinced that there remained no hope for the junta to function as a moderate reformist political force, the opposition united in May 1980 to form the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). Its membership includes much of the Roman Catholic Church, every labor union in El Salvador, peasant organizations, student and teacher groups, the Social Democratic Party (MNR), the Christian Socialists (MPSC), the small Communist Party (PCES), and the several leftist popular organizations: the People's Revolutionary Bloc (BPR), the United Popular Action Front (FAPU), and the 28th of February People's Leagues (LP-28). Simultaneously, the military activities of the leftist groups were combined into the Farabundo Martí People's Liberation Front (FMLN), under the operational control of the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU), the coordinating board of the leftist movement. The FDR has been characterized consistently as representing the left wing by the U.S. government and by the U.S. media. However, former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Murat Williams has noted that this heterogeneous left makes up over 80 percent of the Salvadoran population. In his critique of the misleading State Department political nomenclature, Williams inquires, "If these are the left, where is the center?"⁷

Throughout the summer and fall of 1980 the junta continued its rightward trend as the political climate in El Salvador became increasingly oppressive. In late November 1980, the security forces cooperated with rightist death squads in the arrest of six prominent FDR leaders, including Enrique Alvarez Cordoba, a wealthy oligarch who served as the organization's leader. The six were found dead some days later, several of the bodies showing unmistakable signs of torture. These brutal murders by the security forces intensified moderate opposition mistrust of the junta, and aggravated fears that any serious efforts at negotiations would be greeted with death by the junta. Shortly thereafter, in early December 1980, three American nuns and a lay missionary who were active in caring for San Salvador's growing refugee population were raped and murdered. There are strong indications that the security forces were responsible for their deaths. President Carter immediately halted U.S. military assistance to El Salvador pending a full investigation of the deaths.

7. *New York Times*, 28 December 1980.

This series of events triggered the most recent change in the composition of the junta. Col. Adolfo Majano, the only remaining moderate member of the ruling body, was expelled by an overwhelming vote of military officers. Col. Majano then declined an offer to assume a low-level diplomatic position — an obvious attempt to silence his critical voice — and instead went underground to cooperate with the FDR. Majano was arrested by the security forces in mid-February 1981 and is now in exile in the U.S. The removal of Col. Majano represented the complete victory of the rightist forces for control of the junta. A triumvirate was formed, with José Napoleón Duarte as president, Col. Jaime Abdul Gutierrez as vice-president and, more importantly, with Defense Minister Col. José Guillermo García finally a formal member of the junta. A Latin American diplomat supplied the following evaluation of the changes: "If García is Minister of Defense and Duarte is not Commander in Chief, then Mr. Duarte is an adornment."⁸

Following this recomposition of the junta in mid-December 1980, the U.S. resumed economic and military assistance to El Salvador, despite there having been no serious effort to investigate the nuns' deaths, the ostensible reason for the suspension of aid. Thus, by the end of the Carter Administration, it had become clear not only that the U.S. was prepared to support a rightist junta in its battle against social change in El Salvador, but that the U.S. was willing to accept, or was at least indifferent to, junta-sponsored terrorism. It would remain to the Reagan Administration to depict such a violence-prone, politically illegitimate client regime as the innocent victim of Communist subversion.

The misperception of the junta as a centrist regime assaulted by extremist violence has rested on two fallacious assumptions: first, that the junta was not responsible for rightist violence; and second, that the junta was actually undertaking serious socio-economic reform. Both of these assumptions are invalid, and as Richard Millet has pointed out,

While the junta has tried to portray itself as a moderate force, caught between extremist violence from both left and right, its continued dependence upon the armed forces kept this image from gaining much credibility. Government and right-wing violence were often synonymous.⁹

The evidence for junta complicity in, and culpability for, rightist paramilitary violence seems overwhelming, with church groups such as the Archdiocese of San Salvador Legal Aid Office compiling extensive documentation on verified instances of repression by the security forces. The Salvadoran Human

8. *New York Times*, 14 December 1980.

9. Richard Millet, "The Politics of Violence: Guatemala and El Salvador," *Current History* (February 1981), p. 72.

Rights Commission has compiled a list of 13,194 deaths in 1980 alone, most of which they attribute to the security forces. Military defectors from the junta's reign of terror, including former junta member Col. Adolfo Majano, have stated that the rightist death squads are composed of off-duty soldiers. Former U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White has described the junta as "one of the most out-of-control, violent, blood-thirsty groups of men in the world. They have killed — at a minimum — 5,000 or 6,000 kids, on the suspicion that they were involved with the leftists."¹⁰ Amnesty International reported that "human rights violations had continued or worsened since the October coup," noting in particular torture and murder of political prisoners, disappearance and probable murder of political activists, assassinations of priests, peasants and union members, and even murders of children.¹¹ According to an OAS Inter-American Human Rights Commission report,

Many persons have died as a result of the actions of the security bodies and of the official paramilitary organization known as ORDEN. The security bodies and the official paramilitary organization ORDEN have committed torture and physical and psychological mistreatment in many cases.¹²

ORDEN was supposedly abolished as one of the first acts of the October junta, but it continues to flourish on a privately financed basis along with other rightist paramilitary groups such as the White Warriors Union (UGB), the Falange, the White Hand (Mano Blanca), and the Maximilian Hernandez Martinez Brigade, all largely composed of moonlighting soldiers. Amnesty International has commented that despite the abolition decree,

No concrete measures were taken to dismantle the ORDEN organization nor to break the relationship between the police and the military and ORDEN.¹³

The activities of the security forces and the rightist paramilitary groups are virtually indistinguishable, and such atrocities as the massacre of mourners at the funeral of Archbishop Romero, the massacre of hundreds of peasants at the Sumpul River,¹⁴ the assassination of the six moderate FDR leaders in November 1980, the massacre of 50 refugees at the Lempa River, and the brutal rapes and

10. *New York Times*, 1 March 1981.

11. *Amnesty International Report 1980* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1980), p. 133.

12. OAS Inter-American Human Rights Commission, *Report on El Salvador* (Washington, D.C., 1978).

13. *Amnesty International Report 1980, op. cit.*, p. 136.

14. The Sumpul River massacre, virtually ignored in the U.S. media, occurred on May 14, 1980 on the banks of the Sumpul River, the boundary between part of El Salvador and Honduras. National Guard troops took prisoner the entire populations of the villages of San Jacinto and Las Aradas, 600 men, women, and children and slaughtered them en masse. According to one

murders of the American missionaries, can all be linked directly or indirectly to the security forces and their rightist collaborators. The frequency and magnitude of these terrorist atrocities suggest that their cause is not the deplorable excesses of irresponsible rightist elements in the security forces, but rather part of a systematic pattern of terror designed to intimidate the people of El Salvador and to enforce obedience to the dictates of the junta. With regard to U.S. foreign policy, it will be interesting to witness whether Secretary of State Alexander Haig's proclaimed intention to combat international terrorism will extend to the state terrorism perpetrated by what U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Jeanne Kirkpatrick has so charitably denominated "moderately repressive regimes."

The sole justification which can be provided by the defenders of the junta for the unabated repression of the security forces was that this was an integral element of a policy of reform with repression, where the latter was the necessary instrument for the full implementation of the former. This policy of reform with repression has become the *leitmotif* of contemporary Salvadoran politics. It is a subtle change from Alastair White's concession/repression policy mix, which was the prevailing political paradigm over the past half century in El Salvador.¹⁵ The concession/repression policy mix involved alternating periods of concession and repression according to the political atmosphere, but these have not been combined into one internally contradictory policy package. Before his death, Archbishop Romero warned that "Reforms are meaningless when they come bathed in blood."¹⁶ Even substantive reforms would be meaningless under such circumstances, but many of the present reforms are only empty symbolism, lacking any substance whatsoever, and are intended only to bestow a falsely acquired aura of legitimacy upon the junta.

The Misperception of Effective Reform

The leading example of such meaningless reform is the much-heralded land reform. El Salvador's land reform program was announced on March 6th, 1980, as the third junta was formed with José Napoleón Duarte at its head. The actual land reform program involves three phases, the first of which mandates the ex-

eyewitness, "Some soldiers and ORDEN people gathered children and babies together. I saw them throw children in the air and then slash them with long machetes. They cut their heads off and slit their bodies in two. One soldier told the mother of a child, 'We are killing the children of subversion.'" For more complete descriptions see "The Plight of Salvadoran Refugees," Congressional Record, 27 September 1980, p. S13375; Edouard Bailby, "Terreur dans les campagnes de El Salvador," *Le Monde Diplomatique* (January 1981); and Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, "El Salvador: Reagan's War," *Village Voice*, 24 March 1981. Unfortunately, the Sumpul River massacre does not appear to be an isolated incident. Another massacre in which 50 civilians, mostly women and children, were killed took place on the Lempa River on March 18, 1981. For a description see *Boston Globe*, 26 March 1981.

15. Alastair White, *El Salvador* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 96.

16. *New York Times*, 16 March 1980.

propriation of estates larger than 500 hectares, affecting 263 estates and approximately 15 percent of El Salvador's arable land. The as yet unimplemented Phase II would expropriate estates in the 150-500 hectare range, including the coffee estates, the basis of the oligarchy's economic power. Phase III, known as the Land to the Tiller (LTTT) program converts renters of land into the owners of land they occupy and cultivate. Full compensation would be paid to the owners of the expropriated land, with varying proportions of cash payments and long-term government bonds for those affected by each phase of the land reform.

According to H.C. Tai, land reform involves the rational and equitable restructuring of a defective land-tenure system by compulsory, drastic, and rapid means. Land reform is an essential prerequisite to agricultural development and economic modernization, yet political elites are generally motivated to initiate land reform by the perception of the need for legitimacy and not by considerations of peasant welfare.¹⁷ In the case of El Salvador, this underlying motivation reveals a basic paradox in the junta's land reform strategy: that the search for legitimacy through significant land reform would weaken the elite for whom the junta sought legitimacy. On this subject, the World Bank reports:

A meaningful land reform will inevitably destroy or limit the power base of many persons. Ambitious programs of land reform will seldom be implemented unless there are shifts in political sentiment and power. Many countries have legislated land reform but only a few can be said to have implemented it.¹⁸

El Salvador's land reform program was implemented in conjunction with the imposition of martial law which restricts political meetings, limits political advertising, and allows the security forces to arrest and detain citizens without specifying charges. It also bars freedom of travel, freedom of the press, freedom of privacy in personal correspondence, and freedom of association without a permit. This linking of land reform with martial law indicated the intention of the military to use the occupation of the expropriated estates as a pretext for counterinsurgency operations. Former Minister of the Economy Oscar Menjivar, who resigned shortly after the promulgation of the land reform decree, condemned the violence associated with the implementation of the land reform, observing that:

it was impossible for the agrarian reform to gain significant improvement in the standard of living of the peasants at a time when

17. Hung-Chao Tai, *Land Reform and Politics: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

18. *Land Reform*, World Bank Sector Policy Paper (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 9.

there was a general situation of terror which constantly threatened the lives of the rural workers and their families.¹⁹

This general situation of terror was not the result of violent encounters with intransigent landowners or with leftist guerilla forces. Instead, it involved the dispossession of land from *peasant* organizations, and its transfer to pro-junta groups such as ORDEN and the Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS). According to Amnesty International,

villages supporting peasant unions, such as the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (FECCAS) and the Union of Rural Workers, were attacked by troops, and the land seized was handed over to members of government organizations.²⁰

The land reform suffered from further flaws beyond the violence with which it was associated. It was criticized from the outset for inconsistencies, and one leading academic authority, the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, concluded that, "In general, this is a very hastily and poorly drafted law."²¹ Each phase of the land reform is rendered defective by various shortcomings, which have been subjected to a critical analysis by OXFAM-America. The OXFAM-America report concludes that Phase I:

- 1) ignores the pressing needs of the landless, 60 percent of El Salvador's rural population;
- 2) does not represent a far-reaching restructuring of the agrarian sector;
- 3) leaves untouched most of El Salvador's export crops;
- 4) has not substantially changed the lives of the colonos, permanent hacienda laborers;
- 5) has been accompanied by an alarming surge of violence against peasants;
- 6) suffers from serious deficiencies in planning and implementation.²²

Over 60 percent of the Phase I lands were previously used for cattle grazing or previously lay fallow, are mountainous, or forest; in short, lands virtually

19. "Plight of Salvadoran Refugees," *op. cit.*, p. S13375.

20. Amnesty International Report 1980, *op. cit.*, p. 135. For a description of the politics of peasant organization in El Salvador, including the UCS denunciation of the land reform, see Philip Wheaton, "Agrarian Reform in El Salvador: A Program of Rural Pacification," *EPICA Task Force* (Washington, D.C., 1980), p. 15.

21. Lawrence Simon and James Stephens, *El Salvador Land Reform 1980-1981: Impact Audit* (Boston: Oxfam-America, 1981), p. 26.

22. *Ibid.* p. 40.

useless for labor-intensive cultivation of subsistence crops such as corn and beans, the dietary staples of El Salvador's campesinos. Only 14 percent of the coffee estates, the country's major source of agricultural wealth, were affected by Phase I.²³

Phase II would potentially affect over 70 percent of coffee production, 23 percent of El Salvador's arable land, and between 1700-1800 estates. However, Phase II appears at present to have been indefinitely postponed. OXFAM-America concludes:

The failure to follow through seriously on Phase II, economically the most important phase, places in grave doubt the commitment of the junta to agrarian reform. Furthermore, it makes a mockery of claims that the economic hold of the coffee oligarchy has been broken.

The third phase of the land reform program, the LTTT program, is completely inappropriate to El Salvador's agricultural system, as it would further fragment overly small minifundia holdings and inhibit plot rotation and fallow systems by freezing land ownership for thirty years. This fragmentation into individual plots would lead to aggravated erosion and decreased productivity, ignoring cooperative solutions to agricultural production problems and, in the words of OXFAM-America:

Phase III must be seen as a politically expedient measure adopted not to conform with the agricultural needs of El Salvador's people, but rather as an attempt to generate popular support for a faltering regime.²⁵

One U.S. official defined the LTTT program by declaring that, "There's no one more conservative than a small farmer. We're going to be breeding capitalists like rabbits."²⁶ The incongruous image of capitalism rapidly reproducing itself in a rabbit-like fashion through the rural areas of El Salvador demonstrates an almost willfully ignorant U.S. attitude towards land reform in El Salvador. Land reform is a complex socio-economic process, which cannot be simplistically reduced to such facile formulae with any chance of successful implementation.

The father of the Salvadoran land reform scheme and the philosophical formulator of this doctrine of peasant capitalism is Roy Prosterman, a professor of law at the University of Washington. Prosterman's basic premise is that the tendency toward revolutionary upheaval is proportionate to the percentage of

23. *Ibid.* p. 22.

24. *Ibid.* p. 38.

25. *Ibid.* p. 43.

26. *Ibid.* p. 62.

landless peasants in the rural population. Once land is redistributed to this segment of the rural population, the tendency toward social turmoil will subside.²⁷ This model received its original application in Vietnam and has been closely emulated in El Salvador.²⁸ Discussion of the validity of this theory as a possible explanation and solution for political instability is beyond the scope of this article. However, the effectiveness of the land reform program in practice is highly questionable. Apart from the shortcomings of the program at the implementation stage described above, the program is administratively flawed. Samuel P. Huntington has written that there are two conditions which an effective land reform program must meet:

First, in almost all cases, the government has to create a new and adequately financed administrative organization well staffed with expert talent and committed to the cause of reform . . . The second organizational requirement of land reform is the organization of peasants themselves. Concentrated power can enact land reform decrees, but only expanded power can make those decrees into reality. While peasant participation is not necessary to pass legislation, it is necessary to implement legislation.²⁹

In El Salvador, both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Institute for Rural Transformation (ISTA) are charged with implementing land reform. The effectiveness of these organizations in fulfilling their appointed task has been substantially reduced by numerous resignations and protests at several bureaucratic levels. The Deputy Minister of Agriculture resigned along with the other MPSC members in protest over the land reform. In May 1980, ISTA technicians went on strike to denounce the repression of peasant organizations and the murder of ISTA employees by the security forces. The ISTA technicians strike underscores the contradictory nature of the reform with repression formula, especially the basic incompatibility of militarily and agriculturally oriented approaches to land reform. Consequently, the security forces have been largely responsible for the implementation of land reform.

Neither Prosterman's article³⁰ nor the land reform program itself reflect

27. Roy Prosterman, "Land Reform as Foreign Aid," *Foreign Policy*, No. 6, (Spring 1972), p. 130.
28. Prosterman's defense of the Salvadoran land reform program will appear in the forthcoming Summer 1981 issue of *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 1, under the title, "Land Reform, El Salvador, and the Security is Development Equation." This article closely resembles, both in content and in format the "Land Reform as Foreign Aid" article cited above.
29. Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 394.
30. "Land Reform, El Salvador, and the Security is Development Equation," *International Security*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Summer 1981).

Huntington's emphasis on peasant organization as an 'imperative' for successful land reform. Initially, the government-backed Salvadoran Communal Union (UCS) had backed the land reform program. By June 1980, the UCS had withdrawn its support of the land reform program and adopted the critical perspective of other FDR-sponsored peasant organizations such as FECCAS and the Union of Rural Workers, excluded from participation in the land reform program since its inception.

The El Salvador land reform program cannot be considered a meaningful effort at land reform until these administrative problems are solved. Phase II of the program, which would provide for the expropriation of the coffee estates, should also be implemented if the program is to obtain any legitimacy in conceptual as well as in practical terms. This is unlikely at the present time, given the identification of the junta with the right wing, which is the political manifestation of the oligarchy and their supporters, the owners and operators of the coffee estates. Even if Phase II were to be implemented, the land reform suffers from serious flaws which limit the beneficiary population and organize the redistributed land in an inefficient land tenure pattern. But until and unless Phase II is implemented, the proponents of the programs cannot be commended for even its limited benefits. In its present form, the land reform cannot be seen to constitute anything more than an excuse for the continued maintenance of an inequitable structure for the ownership of wealth and the distribution of income.

Misperception of Exaggerated Foreign Involvement

On February 23, 1981, the State Department announced the compilation of a long-awaited White Paper which alleges Cuban, Soviet, East European, and even Ethiopian and Vietnamese support of the FDR, with arms transfers to the FDR shipped through Nicaragua. The State Department White Paper is based on documents captured from the Popular Forces of Liberation (FPL), one of the leading guerilla organizations. Without necessarily questioning the authenticity of these documents, it is worthwhile considering a point made by the *Economist*, that "captured documents are a risky basis for sound intelligence, particularly when those who say they captured them have an interest in proving that their contents are accurate."³¹ Statements by Secretary of State Alexander Haig have left little doubt as to the purpose of this allegation. The issue was to be used as a barometer to test the support of the European allies and Latin American governments for U.S. policies, as well as to notify the Soviet Union that this is a conflict which the U.S. expected to "win." The semantic content of "winning" in El Salvador has been articulated by journalist William Safire, who rhetorically inquires:

31. *The Economist*, 21 February 1981, p. 30.

What is winning? Is it supporting a military junta that kills the opposition but by its repressive nature produces more opposition that becomes necessary to kill?³²

The documentation presented in the White Paper suggests that the political organization, coordination, and arming of the insurgents has been directed by Cuba and other socialist states, and that:

In short, over the past year, the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into a textbook case of indirect armed aggression by Communist powers through Cuba.³³

Although the reputed 18 pounds worth of documents on which the White Paper is based have not been made public, it can be assumed that the documents presented are the most significant. White House press secretary James Brady colloquially summarized the selective documentation as "clear evidence of catching the Communists' hands in the cookie jar."³⁴

One immediately apparent flaw in the White Paper is the mistaken portrayal of all the socialist states as a monolithic bloc, identifying the Soviet Union with all the actions carried out by Cuba or Nicaragua. Evidence of at least some Cuban and Nicaraguan support of the Salvadoran leftists seems irrefutable, but no convincing evidence of direct Soviet involvement has been presented.

Somewhat misleadingly, the State Department White Paper centers upon the role of socialist states in the provision of arms and ignores the role of alternative sources of weapons supplies to the Salvadoran left. According to German Cienfuegos, the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of National Resistance, arms are procured through purchases on the international black market, through seizure of weapons from the Salvadoran military, and through crude domestic manufacturing operations.³⁵ The Salvadoran left has ample financial resources to purchase weapons from these sources through a continuing campaign of bank robberies and kidnappings of oligarchs and foreign executives. In the words of former CIA deputy director Theodore Shackley, "Financing has been no problem."³⁶ Nor has weapons procurement been a problem, and arms supplies have been obtained from a variety of sources, including American black market arms dealers. The socialist states constitute an important but not predominant source of arms supplies to the Salvadoran left, and the White Paper's effort to portray them as the sole source of arms supplies is a serious distortion of reality. In essence, the White Paper's presentation of

32. William Safire, "The Savings of Salvador," *New York Times*, 26 February 1981.

33. *New York Times*, 20 February 1981.

34. *New York Times*, 26 February 1981.

35. *Los Angeles Times*, 28 December 1979.

36. Theodore Shackley, *The Third Option: An American View of Counterinsurgency Operations* (New York: Readers Digest Press, 1981).

the Salvadoran conflict is highly misleading in that it offers a sketchy and incomplete rendition of the situation; the actual picture is substantially complicated by the presence of other sources of intervention in the internal affairs of El Salvador, not the least of which is U.S. support for the junta.

The White Paper and subsequent State Department presentations of the alleged external command and control of the Salvadoran leftist movement have ignored the history of official repression and popular suffering that has traditionally characterized Salvadoran society during the past half-century. No mention is made of the 1932 peasant insurrection against the government, known as the Matanza, or slaughter, which was brutally suppressed at the cost of an estimated 30,000 lives.³⁷ This bloody event baptized the beginning of military rule in El Salvador, and foreshadowed the nature of the military response to future popular discontent. Throughout the following fifty years, the military, operating in connection with the oligarchy, effectively silenced the voices advocating significant reforms through what Alastair White termed "working out the correct concession/repression formula."³⁸ Open and large-scale manifestations of discontent were repressed but an opportunity was provided for those who were content to promote piecemeal reforms to do so through ineffectual opposition parties. The concession/repression formula had broken down by the early 1970s. Disillusioned and frustrated with the fraudulent elections of 1972, Christian Democrats, students, intellectuals and PCES members began the formation of clandestine leftist groups to challenge the dual despotism of the oligarchy and the military. No evidence exists of Cuban or other external forces instigating the formation of these groups or participating in their organization. These leftist groups continued to evolve independently throughout the 1970s, becoming more politically visible by the mid-1970s through the creation of the popular front coalitions of peasant, student, and worker groups. These leftist groups turned to guerilla warfare following the February 28 1977 massacre of demonstrators in San Salvador protesting the fraudulent 1977 elections. Together with labor unions, much of the Catholic church, and such moderate opposition parties as the MPC and the MNR, the leftist groups united in April 1980 to form the FDR. Its roots are deeply historic and entirely indigenous; the opposition has thus reached its present unified state independent of Cuban assistance.

The White Paper not only contends that Socialist states acting through Cuba are responsible for the arming of the insurgency, but that Cuba also coordinates the political direction and organization of the leftist movement. This allegation does not withstand a careful, critical analysis. Cuban influence over the DRU,

37. For full description of this event, see Thomas Anderson, *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).

38. Alastair White, *El Salvador*, p. 103.

the directorate of the FDR, would presumably be exercised through the PCES, yet the PCES is a small, secondary group within the FDR and has little substantive control over the DRU. The political orientation of the PCES is unmistakably pro-Soviet, but it is conservative enough to have sided with Jose Napoleon Duarte and the PDC in the 1972 elections, and again supported the PDC in the 1977 elections. The political wing of the PCES, the National Democratic Union (UDN), even participated in the October 1979 junta, which was opposed by some of the leftist groups, the BPR, FAPU, and LP-28 — now inaccurately described as Communist-led or dominated. The political platform of the FDR is social democratic in inspiration, and has been equally influenced by Catholic liberation theology and Marxist-Leninist political philosophy. The leading practical and ideological example for the FDR is the pragmatic and pluralistic Sandinista movement in Nicaragua, and efforts by U.S. diplomats and academics to illustrate the FDR as a “Pol Pot” Left under Cuban direction are so ludicrous as to belie further rational discussion.

This alleged evidence of Soviet/Cuban military assistance to, and even direction of, the Salvadoran leftist movement has been utilized in the construction of a “born-again” domino theory of Communist subversion threatening to engulf all of Central America. President Reagan himself has informed the world that the purpose of U.S. support of the junta is to:

try to halt the infiltration into the Americas, by terrorists and by outside interference, and those who aren't just aiming at El Salvador but are, I think, aiming at the whole of Central and possibly later South America, and I'm sure eventually North America.³⁹

William Clark, Deputy Under Secretary of State, has even deified this ridiculous resurrection of the domino theory, stating that El Salvador is “truly a step in their divine plan to go on to Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and then, a true threat to Mexico itself.”⁴⁰ Central America has always been a socially and politically interdependent region, with each country sensitive to developments within its neighbors. However, to contend that Soviet and Cuban influence and arms supplies can generate an irreversible revolutionary tide throughout the entire region ignores the unique circumstances of each country's internal political situation. Revolution in Central America arises from internal social and economic problems and the unavailability of political means to redress the resultant grievances. It is precisely these internal problems that allow external forces — the Soviet Union, Cuba, and it should be noted, even the United States — to influence the situation. As noted by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State John Bushnell:

39. *New York Times*, 7 March 1981.

40. *New York Times*, 13 March 1981.

Where the internal dynamics of a particular country result in economic or social upheavals or in large dissatisfied groups, the opportunities for the Soviets and the Cubans to increase their influence is enhanced.⁴¹

Fidel Castro has expressed much of the same sentiments, stating that:

We do not come to light revolutionary fires. No one can be a torch-bearer for other revolutionaries. People are like volcanoes. They just explode. And the whole range of Central America is now a volcano.⁴²

Bushnell's internal dynamics hypothesis and Castro's more colorful metaphor both downplay the role of external forces and influences as the catalytic factor in revolution. Internal political turmoil facilitated the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua; it threatens El Salvador today, and will perhaps prevail in Guatemala and Honduras tomorrow. An unconditional U.S. policy maintaining a semi-feudal status quo contributes to the exacerbation of social and political discontent in Central America and thereby generates opportunities for Soviet and Cuban influence. This is the paradoxical result of an effort to contain Soviet and Cuban expansionism without dealing with the internal problems which permit external forces to influence the course of events. Instead of a textbook case of indirect aggression, the present situation in El Salvador represents a situation where external forces successfully exploited internal problems, the resolution of which would have precluded initially the necessity or opportunity for external involvement. Finally, even where external forces do operate successfully, Jorge Dominguez warns that:

The U.S. must continue to resist the temptation to exaggerate or overdramatize the admittedly real, but modest advances made by the Soviet Union and Cuba in Central American and the Caribbean, most of which occurred independently of Cuban and Soviet actions and none of which threatens the U.S.⁴³

41. "Impact of Soviet-Cuban ties in the Western Hemisphere," Hearings before the House of Representatives Committee on International Relations, April 1978.

42. Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, "El Salvador: A Revolution Brews," *NACLA* (July-August 1980), p. 29.

43. Jorge Dominguez, "The U.S. and its Regional Security Interests: The Caribbean, Central and South America," *Daedalus* (Fall 1980), p. 124.

Conclusion

According to the controversial dissent paper on U.S. policy toward El Salvador,⁴⁴

The Reagan Administration's first international crisis may well be in El Salvador. Candidate Reagan's foreign policy advisors have made deeply disturbing statements about their plans for the Central America and Caribbean region. However, should President Reagan choose to use force in El Salvador, historians will be able to show that the setting for such actions had been prepared in the last year of the Carter Administration.⁴⁵

The historical record will portray U.S. support of the junta in El Salvador as perhaps only a minor issue among the many foreign policy fiascoes of the Carter Administration. Nevertheless, Carter Administration policy on El Salvador compares favorably with the Reagan Administration's in terms of its firmness and resolve. In the words of T.D. Allman,

Even in the good old hard-nosed days of *entente cordiale* between Washington and Batista and Trujillo and Papa Doc and all the rest, it would have been difficult to find an instance of an American President standing quite so resolutely behind a regime that quite so shamelessly tortured peasants and castrated doctors of philosophy and disembowled children and raped nuns and shot archbishops dead while they celebrated Mass.⁴⁶

The dissent paper's prophecy of El Salvador's emergence as the first international crisis of the Reagan Administration has been largely fulfilled, due both to the FMLN general offensive in January 1981 immediately before the Reagan inauguration, and to a conscious policy decision by the Reagan Administration. Secretary of State Alexander Haig's announcement of the decision to "bring El Salvador to the forefront of world attention and to make attitudes towards the guerilla war there an early barometer of relations with the U.S."⁴⁷ was later downplayed, but succeeded entirely in its purpose. This policy decision was based on the rather implausible premise that the insurgency in El Salvador had

44. This dissent paper, allegedly a State Department dissent channel document, was first circulated in Washington in early November 1980. Its authenticity has been denied by both the Carter and the Reagan administrations. It is treated herein as an interesting and unusual analysis of the El Salvador situation, without implication of its origin. It was published in the *Harvard Crimson*, 23 January 1981.

45. Dissent Paper, in *Harvard Crimson*, 23 January 1981, p. 5.

46. T.D. Allman, "Rising to Rebellion: Inside El Salvador," *Harper's* (March 1981), p. 40.

47. *New York Times*, 20 February 1981.

been transformed into an "indirect armed aggression against a small Third World country by Communist powers acting through Cuba."⁴⁸ This policy focus has resulted in the dispatch of Assistant Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger to Western Europe and former CIA Deputy Director Vernon Walters to Latin America to gain allied support for U.S. pro-junta policy. These diplomatic initiatives have been supplemented by the resumption of military assistance to the junta, along with the provision of 54 U.S. military advisors, including 15 Green Berets for counterinsurgency instruction. The Reagan Administration has recently requested \$80-100 million in economic assistance and \$25 million in military assistance for the fiscal years 1981 and 1982.

We believe that the newly formulated El Salvador policy of the Reagan Administration is profoundly mistaken. El Salvador is a small country which does not merit conversion into a pawn in a resurrected Cold War. The legitimate aspirations of the Salvadoran people for social change should not be sacrificed to the dubious advantages of a demonstration of American resolve against perceived Soviet and Cuban expansionism. Further, few U.S. allies in Western Europe or in Latin America can be expected to participate wholeheartedly in a U.S.-led effort to prop up the junta in El Salvador. An unsupportive allied attitude can already be seen in the non-committal to skeptical range of responses to the Eagleburger and Walter missions.

Every incoming U.S. administration is endowed with a certain quantity of diplomatic capital, the employment of which will determine the success of U.S. foreign policy in general, and the strength of the U.S.-led alliance system in particular. The selection of El Salvador as the Reagan Administration foreign policy debut can hardly serve as an auspicious precedent for the future conduct of this administration's foreign policy; indeed, a major expenditure of diplomatic resources on the behalf of such an unpopular and repressive regime can only result from a flawed strategic conception.

A critical analysis of U.S. foreign policy towards El Salvador must initially delineate what national interests and foreign policy objectives of the U.S. are involved both in the present situation in El Salvador and in Central America in general. These include:

- 1) fostering long-term regional stability through the formulation of enduring solutions to fundamental socio-economic problems;
- 2) development of more harmonious and less hegemonic inter-American relations;
- 3) promotion of more democratic governments and more equitable economic structures;
- 4) emphasis upon political rather than military solutions to political problems; and

48. *Ibid.*

5) containment of Soviet and Cuban influence in the region.

A U.S. foreign policy for Central America designed to prevent opportunities for Soviet and Cuban involvement should endeavor to promote modes of peaceful social change. Such a policy may involve the erosion of the entrenched privileges of a pro-American oligarchy, but is an absolute imperative if the U.S. is to avoid identification as the patron of an exploitative elite in the eyes of the peoples of Central America. The U.S. can exercise significant leverage in the attainment of these objectives in El Salvador through the economic and military assistance without which the junta could not survive.

The junta has announced the planned formation of a constituent assembly to prepare for elections tentatively scheduled for March 1982. A pro-democratic U.S. policy should emphasize the acceleration of the election schedule, while also seeking to ensure that the Salvadoran military tradition of blatant electoral fraud is held in abeyance. The benefits of such a policy would be threefold. First, moderate elements of the FDR such as the MNR and the MPSC, would probably be willing to participate in international supervised free elections, allowing a non-violent dialogue with an important segment of the opposition. FDR leader Guillermo Manuel Ungo has publicly stated his willingness to negotiate with the U.S. on the terms of reference for free elections, and even President Duarte admits that Ungo, his former vice-presidential running mate, would be formidable opposition in free elections. In a country where the junta commands the support of only the far right and the military, such an opening to the center and center-left of the political spectrum is essential for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Second, the holding of free elections would have the effect of legitimizing the junta in the event of a PDC victory, and would provide a mechanism for the peaceful transfer of power if the opposition triumphed. It must be reiterated that truly free elections must allow the opposition to fully participate in the electoral process as a fraudulently suspect PDC election victory would discredit the democratic process. International supervision of the elections would probably ensure sufficient safeguards to induce the participation of the moderate opposition leaders now in exile or in hiding.

The April 1980 Constituent Assembly elections in Honduras provide a recent example from Central America of the defeat of the military-backed party, the National Party, by the opposition Liberal party, where the military peacefully abided by the results. Firm U.S. pressure on the Salvadoran military could perhaps guarantee an equally graceful acknowledgment of the popular will in the event of an opposition election victory in El Salvador. A third reason militating in favor of U.S. support of free elections is that linkage of U.S. economic and military assistance to the holding of free elections would be an explicit statement of policy preference. As noted by William LeoGrande and Carla Robbins, "by ending military aid, the U.S. could send a clear message to the armed forces that it does not support attempts to impose a military solution

to political problems."⁴⁹ International support for a political solution to the Salvadoran crisis is widespread, and has been publicly advocated by Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Sweden, Venezuela, and exiled Salvadoran opposition leaders. However, support for a political solution is absent from, or is at the very least a conspicuously understated element of U.S. policy, as witnessed by the planned increase in military assistance to the junta. The State Department has affirmed that the goal of U.S. policy is to facilitate the transition to an elected government.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, actions speak louder than words, and the Salvadoran junta will undoubtedly interpret the expansion of U.S. military assistance as a vote of confidence for their policy of reform with repression. As the reforms have been shown to be little more than a sham, little remains of the junta's policy beyond repression — the political expression of the military solution. Shortly before his death, Archbishop Romero sent a letter to President Carter pleading that he not renew military assistance as this would only "sharpen the repression." Archbishop Romero is now dead, President Carter is out of office, and military assistance has been resumed. Only the repression continues. In a long-term foreign policy perspective, U.S. containment of repression by friendly client regimes may be more important to the preservation of democratic freedoms than the containment of Soviet and Cuban influence, itself only the indirect by-product of the very same repression. The U.S. promotion of human rights and the advancement of democracy will only be demeaned and degraded by association with repressive regimes. A close relationship with the bloodstained junta in El Salvador is the most salient case in point.

The election of a democratic government is an essential prerequisite to the establishment of a more equitable economic structure in El Salvador. The economy of El Salvador has been dominated for the past century by the oligarchic 'fourteen families,' a parasitic elite composed of several thousand privileged individuals who until recently have owned 60 percent of the agricultural land, the entire banking and foreign trade systems, and most of the nation's industry, while receiving 60 percent of national income. Salvadoran society has the most skewed income distribution and inequitable economic structure of any Latin American country.⁵¹ U.S. foreign aid and technical assistance could greatly facilitate the equitable restructuring of the economy, particularly if such assistance were explicitly presented as an incentive for free elections. Bilateral U.S. foreign aid could be combined with accelerated disbursements of international financial institution lending, especially for such infrastructural projects

49. William LeoGrande and Carla Robbins, "Officers and Oligarchs: The Crisis in El Salvador," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1980), p. 1100.

50. *New York Times*, 14 March 1981.

51. For further discussion on this point, see "Class and Conflict in El Salvador," *Foreign Affairs* (Fall 1980), p. 181.

as housing and transportation. Economic assistance targeted to these areas would make a significant contribution to the improvement of the standard of living of the poorest members of the population, those presumably most supportive of the guerilla forces. President José Napoleón Duarte, the PDC figurehead of the junta, has pointed out the preeminent importance of economic assistance stating, "It is of no use to have the greatest and best army in the world if people are dying of hunger."⁵²

Another potentially important area for U.S. technical assistance would be in education. Richard Millett has noted that the Cuban-sponsored literacy campaign in Nicaragua is one of Cuba's major foreign policy successes in Latin America. He advocates a similar U.S.-sponsored campaign in Honduras.⁵³ With El Salvador's literacy rate abysmally low — illiteracy approaches 95 percent among the rural population — a U.S. sponsored literacy campaign would be a meritorious component of a post-civil war reconstruction campaign. A planned literacy campaign is a specific detail of the FDR political platform, and U.S. support of such a program would be an effective humanitarian method of gaining moderate political support and improving the U.S. political image both in El Salvador and throughout Latin America.

A peacefully negotiated settlement based on free elections would also promote regional stability in Central America by demonstrating to rightist Guatemala and Honduras that social change short of revolution is possible. Such an outcome would diminish the likelihood of Soviet and Cuban influence in the region. The dissent paper compares several of the structural parallels between Zimbabwe in 1978 and El Salvador in 1981, and notes that the will to act of the regional dominant power — the U.K. in Zimbabwe, the U.S. in El Salvador — is necessary for motion towards a negotiated settlement. Similarly, Sen. Edward Kennedy has called for a political solution involving a cease-fire, a halt in military assistance to both sides, and a peace conference with a format similar to the Westminster talks which brought an end to the civil war in Zimbabwe.⁵⁴ The Social Democratic parties of Latin America have offered to function as intermediaries for the commencement of negotiations and have proposed former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt as mediator. The West German and Italian Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties have also offered to assist in the reconciliation process, and both José Napoleón Duarte and Guillermo Manuel Ungo enjoy close relations with their West European counterparts in the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties, respectively. The FDR itself has clearly expressed its preference for negotiations with the U.S., and not with the junta, which they condemn as a genocidal dic-

52. *New York Times*, 3 March 1981.

53. Richard Millett, "Central American Paralysis," *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1980), p. 116.

54. *New York Times*, 23 February, 1981.

tatorship. According to FDR representative to the EEC, Luis de Sebastian, "We have always said that we will negotiate with the owner of the circus and not with the clowns."⁵⁵ The potential for a political solution is now present and it is imperative that the U.S. responsibly seek such a solution instead of engaging in exercises in anti-communist hysteria.

An active U.S. diplomatic role in a negotiated settlement would also help reassure Mexico, which has become deeply concerned about U.S. military involvement in El Salvador. President López Portillo has criticized U.S. efforts to resolve the crisis in El Salvador by military means and, in an apparent show of discontent, reaffirmed Mexican ties with Cuba shortly after the departure of the Walter mission from Mexico City. President López Portillo has warned of the dangers implied by the expanded U.S. involvement:

The crisis that has its temporary epicenter in the Salvadoran conflict has become a spiral that threatens to involve all the states in the area. For this reason, it is necessary to avoid the internationalization of the crisis through a combined policy that has the objective of rigorously preserving the principles of self-determination and non-intervention.⁵⁶

Despite the philosophical tone of the statement it can be interpreted as oblique criticism of a U.S. policy which at present adheres to neither of these principles. A display of non-hegemonic U.S. leadership in seeking a negotiated settlement could have beneficial consequences in the negotiation of the other significantly more important, bilateral U.S.-Mexican issues, such as energy, trade, and immigration.

The implementation of this proposed U.S. policy would be conducive to more harmonious inter-American relations, as there is general hemispheric support for a political solution to the crisis. This would stand in marked contrast to the U.S. reaction to the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, where Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's proposal for a OAS peacekeeping force on the eve of the Sandinista victory won virtually no support in Latin America. It would also stand in marked contrast to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a crude exhibition of superpower force. U.S. diplomatic leadership through a negotiated settlement based on free elections would demonstrate a more sophisticated and subtle superpower strategy of response to political instability within its sphere of influence. Such a policy would win goodwill for the U.S. throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World. The alternative policy of escalating intervention and military assistance now being espoused by the Reagan Ad-

55. FBIS reports that LATIN announced on 4 March 1981 (*Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, 6 March 1981).

56. *New York Times*, 11 March 1981.