

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

ENDERS'S END

THE REPLACEMENT of Thomas Enders as the State Department's top policymaker for Latin America and of Deane Hinton as ambassador to El Salvador have been portrayed as part of a move to "toughen" U.S. policy on Central America, as a power grab by the White House national security adviser, William Clark, at the expense of Secretary of State George Shultz, and as a triumph of hardliners such as U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick and C.I.A. Director William Casey over "soft" foreign service careerists. Actually the situation is both simpler than all that and more complex. Personality differences played a big part in Enders's sacking. Hinton was not sacked at all. The personnel changes were not the result of a change in overall policy toward Central America, but of a determination by Clark that policy was not being effectively implemented. Clark has not executed a Kissinger-style power play, though; on the contrary, Enders was ousted as part of a plan to shift operational control of Central America policy from the White House back to State. And at State, the new Assistant Secretary for Latin America, Langhorne Motley, and the new ambassador in San Salvador, Thomas Pickering, are not noticeably harder-line on policy than Enders and Hinton were. State's original choice for the ambassador's job, John Negroponete, a career diplomat who is currently ambassador to Honduras, actually was rejected by the White House as having too hardline a reputation in Congress.

NEVERTHELESS, the Administration's policy is inexorably becoming "tougher" as the military situation in El Salvador deteriorates and that in Nicaragua improves. At least in the short run, the new personnel changes will do nothing to alter the general drift toward military solutions. Clark, instinctively hardline, has not stolen power, but he has demonstrated that he has it. Shultz, more of a moderate, has yet to show that he can get it back. Clark's fellow hardliners, including Kirkpatrick, had lost some major policy fights to Enders, but in the end they won his scalp, and that enhances their influence. One of these days—after the 1984 election, if it can be put off until then—there may be a decisive struggle over Central America within the Administration, probably over whether or not to send U.S. combat troops or large numbers of advisers to the region—to win it or stay out. At the moment, it's likely that debate will continue over how best to win while staying out and how best to handle domestic opponents of Administration policy—by conciliation and persuasion or by threat and confrontation.

Thomas Enders's friends in the State Department and enemies among Democrats on Capitol Hill find it laughable that he should be cast now as some kind of dove. Ten years ago, as No. 2 man in the U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh, Enders selected targets for secret U.S. bombing raids in Cambodia, earning the respectful notice of Alexander Haig, then chief of staff to President Nixon. As Ronald Reagan's first Secretary of State, Haig intended to pursue a high-tension policy against Latin American Communists, and he selected Enders to help carry out his aims even though Enders had no prior Latin experience. (He has since become fluent in Spanish, no mean feat while working sixteen-hour days as a policy manager.) Haig originally wanted a direct confrontation with Cuba, the "source" of trouble in Central America, but the Administration instead chose quieter options—covert aid to anti-government guerrillas in Nicaragua and stepped-up military aid to the government of El Salvador. Enders supported both—and also backed a process of negotiation with leftists and pressure for human rights reform in El Salvador to an extent that aroused suspicion among the Administration's hardest liners.

Enders's personal and management style did not endear him to his adversaries. He is an imperious, icy man who at six foot-eight acts as though he is used to looking down at other people. One State Department official said, "If Enders had done the same things he did, but had the personality of George Shultz, he'd still be here. The Reaganites like to sit around comfortably and talk about things. You can't do that with Enders present." Enders also is described as "extremely turf conscious," unwilling or unable to delegate authority, and disrespectful of other people's prerogatives. "The White House felt that Enders, not Shultz, was running Latin American policy," one aide said. "Enders really didn't report to anybody." When C.I.A. Director Casey wanted State to release new data on Communist supply lines to El Salvador, Enders sat on the information and deprecated it as "warmed-over leftovers." He got it into his head that Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González could be brought into Central America diplomacy and flew off to see him without consulting anyone, leading the White House to decree that henceforth no one travels without permission.

From the standpoint of Enders's friends at State and elsewhere, the issues over which he was ousted transcend style and concern methods of implementing policy. They say he wanted to conduct it as quietly as possible, so as not to arouse public and congressional opposition, whereas others, including Ambassador Kirkpatrick, wanted to crystallize issues and confront and defeat the opposition.

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They say that Enders wanted the United States to maintain a negotiating "track" in order to mollify domestic and foreign critics of American policy and to put the onus for refusing to talk on the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the leftist opposition in El Salvador.

IN EARLY FEBRUARY Enders wrote a memo recommending a "two-track" policy of military aid and negotiation, an account of which was leaked by Enders's enemies in the White House to *The Washington Post* with the allegation that Enders favored talks that would lead to a coalition government ("power sharing") between right and left in El Salvador. Power-sharing negotiations, favored by many liberals as a means to stop the killing, are regarded in the Administration as a formula for eventual Communist takeover. Enders's allies deny he favored any such thing and that his February memo explicitly favored negotiations only concerning the terms for participation in forthcoming Salvadoran elections. One other official, however, says that the exact nature of the negotiations were left vague, "which is very strange for someone who has made his reputation as a crisp memo writer."

Some of Enders's foes were prepared to believe the worst about Enders's intentions, contending that career foreign service officers as a breed are trained to "yield firmly" even when vital U.S. interests are involved. Some of Enders's friends suspect Kirkpatrick and others of pursuing dark hidden agendas, too. One of them said, "Some people want an elegant defeat that can be blamed on post-Vietnam attitudes and constraints by Congress," leading perhaps to a "who lost Central America" campaign.

From the National Security Council perspective, the issues leading to Enders's replacement are described not as ideological or tactical, but managerial. William Clark did not like what he was seeing in cables from Central America and in what he was forced to include in the President's daily briefing. Beginning last fall, one official said, "It appeared that the government of El Salvador was not winning on the battlefield." Clark ordered an "intense review" conducted through several channels, including a so-called "core group," chaired by Enders and made up of officials from several agencies. The President himself became increasingly involved personally, especially after his trip to Latin America in December gave him an opportunity "to sit in little rooms with presidents and generals and discuss chopper parts and the security situation and get a real feel for the situation on the ground."

In January and February Clark brought Ambassador James Theberge up to Washington from his post in Chile to review the Central America situation. Clark sent Kirkpatrick on a fact-finding tour of Central America. Clark also had former Florida Senator Richard Stone hired as a State Department consultant for congressional relations and public diplomacy. And about the same time, Enders's memo was leaked. Enders approached Clark and asked

about a new assignment—not, reportedly, the one he got as ambassador to Spain—but Clark told him his departure would be asked for when it was desired.

ACCORDING to N.S.C. officials, at no time was Clark usurping the prerogatives of Shultz as Secretary of State, even though Shultz reportedly is "frustrated" at Clark's interventions in his department. N.S.C. officials say that, unlike Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski before him—and to the displeasure of some members of his staff—Clark has resolutely refused to have his subordinates chair interagency committees, leaving that function to representatives of regular departments of government. Clark is said to respect fully the delineations of authority spelled out in N.S.C. decision directives allotting operational responsibility over foreign policy to State. But when Enders was late getting things done, when Clark found that too many meetings had to be conducted in the White House, and when things didn't improve either on the battlefield in Central America or in American public opinion, aides say Clark was forced to step in.

"Public diplomacy"—that is, the selling of American policy to the public, the press, Congress, and world opinion—is an especially troublesome item for the Administration. Clark, for one, had hoped that when Pope John Paul visited El Salvador in early March and when the Salvadoran government announced a speed-up in holding elections this year, Congress would somehow be inspired to vote the additional military aid that the President had requested. This didn't happen, and it was decided that the President should address a joint session of Congress to request the money. At the same time, Clark decided that Enders had to go. In the process of debating what should be in Reagan's April 27 speech, Kirkpatrick urged a "Marshall Plan"—a large economic and humanitarian aid package for the region. Enders opposed it on grounds that Congress would never approve the money. Enders won the point, but fueled Kirkpatrick's hostility.

One should not weep too long over Tom Enders. Spain is a choice post—a pleasant place to live and increasingly important as a forthcoming member of NATO and the European Common Market. Getting fired after a policy dispute with hardliners probably has cleansed Enders's reputation of its Cambodia bombing stain, and when Democrats or moderate Republicans come back to power, he might even be on the short list for the highest-ranking career post in the State Department, the undersecretaryship for political affairs currently held by Lawrence Eagleburger. In watercooler handicapping around the State Department, Enders has three principal rivals for that post—Ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis, former Ambassador to Venezuela William Luers, and former Ambassador to Nigeria Thomas Pickering. Luers had wanted Spain, but Enders got it instead, and Pickering is headed off to El Salvador, a dangerous place to both persons and careers.

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According to both State Department and White House officials, Enders's replacement by Langhorne Motley was designed to restore operational control over Central America policy back to State. Motley, an Alaska Republican who grew up in Brazil and had been Reagan's ambassador there, is regarded as an effective diplomat and political operator and was supported for the Enders job by both Clark and Shultz. During the time it takes Motley to staff up the Latin America bureau—Enders, doing most of the bureau's work himself, was short of deputies—Eagleburger is to oversee Latin policy for Shultz.

The replacement of Deane Hinton as ambassador to El Salvador this summer had been slated for months. Hinton once ran afoul of the White House for openly attacking human rights abuses in El Salvador, but he is generally regarded as having performed courageous service under enormous pressure. Because State wanted Negroonte to replace Hinton, Shultz reportedly recommended a "daisy chain" of diplomatic changes in Central America to the White House, including also the ambassadors to Costa Rica and Guatemala, who also were due for rotation. The White House vetoed Negroonte because it feared his confirmation hearings would turn into "a circus." Negroonte often is accused of masterminding the U.S. "secret war" against Nicaragua from his embassy in Honduras.

THE ENDERS STORY was about to leak, so Shultz announced it aboard Air Force One on the way to the Williamsburg summit. Then Hinton's departure was leaked along with the misinformation that he would be replaced by a retired admiral, Gerald Thomas, currently ambassador to Guyana. Days before, actually, Thomas had been contacted about a new post and said that he would do as the President asked, but preferred Kenya to El Salvador. Because of all the leaks and because some unidentified White House ignoramus maligned the entire foreign service in a crack to *The Washington Post* that "you don't handle Central American policies with tea and crumpets on the diplomatic circuit," it was decided to hold up on announcement of other embassy replacements.

N.S.C. aides like to represent Clark as mainly a loyal servant of Ronald Reagan, but others in the Administration say he has acquired views of his own. One State Department official points out that Clark's wife is a refugee from Czechoslovakia and that his attitudes toward communism reflects hers. "Clark and Reagan have similar

views, not backed by much information," one Administration official said. "Jeane Kirkpatrick adds information and they all reach the same conclusion: that a Soviet-backed, Cuban-assisted effort is underway to overthrow the governments of Central America, and that because of the history of the region, the poverty and injustice, there is a great opportunity for this. They think it is central to U.S. interests that this not happen and they are not going to let it happen."

How far will the United States go? The Reagan Administration's formal policy—and obvious hope—is that large numbers of U.S. advisers or combat troops will not be necessary. Scenarios are being discussed at lower levels, though, under which one or the other might be needed. One is an imminent collapse in El Salvador. The other is an imminent victory by anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua which Cuban troops were called in to prevent. The United States could counter such a move by air-sea blockade as well as insertion of troops.

It is impossible to know for sure how various actors in the Administration would array themselves in a debate about military involvement, and it's idle to speculate. It is reasonably clear, though, that on issues short of war, Clark, Kirkpatrick, and Casey want to be harder on foes both foreign and domestic—and easier on friends—than Shultz and many State Department professionals do. Top White House officials say that Shultz "has a good strong hand with the boss," meaning Reagan. But he is also reported to feel himself under pressure from Clark, who interferes in his department, and from Kirkpatrick, who is described by one aide as "a burr under his saddle" and is suspected by State Department officials of being after Shultz's job. Enders is gone, but the intrigue continues.

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