

Central Intelligence Agency

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31 May 1984

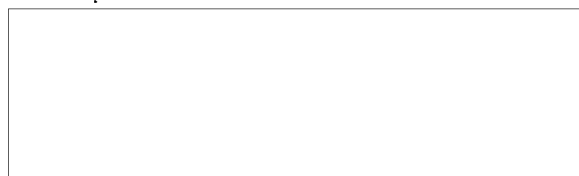
MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Robert M. Kimmitt
Executive Secretary, National Security Council

SUBJECT: White House Digest Article on Development of Democracy in
Central America.

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum, dated 28 May 1984, Subject: Development of
Democracy in Central America.

1. Page 2, first full paragraph on Costa Rica. We suggest you say "with Central America's longest unbroken".
2. Page 4, first paragraph. Date of Salvadoran run-off election was May 6th.
3. Page 5, first paragraph on Nicaragua: "Comandantes" is correct spelling.

STAT



Executive Secretary

cc: Mr. Charles Hill
Executive Secretary
Department of State

Col. John H. Stanford
Executive Secretary
Department of Defense

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Remarks
Please review as usual from intelligence point of view only and prepare response for my signature.

JSE
Executive Secretary
29 May 1984
Date

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

May 28, 1984

Executive Registry
84-2341

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. CHARLES HILL
Executive Secretary
Department of State

COL (P) JOHN STANFORD
Executive Secretary
Department of Defense

Executive Secretary
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: White House Digest: Development
of Democracy in Central America

The attached White House Digest is being sent to you for first
round review/clearance. Please submit your comments by May 31.

Robert M. Kimmitt
Robert M. Kimmitt
Executive Secretary

Attachment

White House Digest

DCI
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L-299

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA

"Experience has destroyed the argument of the old dictators that a strong hand is essential to avoid anarchy and communism, and that order and progress can be achieved only through authoritarianism. The modern experience of Latin America suggests that order is more often threatened when people have no voice in their own destinies. Social peace is more likely in societies where political justice is founded on self-determination and protected by formal guarantees. ... [W]e must do all we can to nurture democracy in this hemisphere."

Report of the National Bipartisan
Commission on Central America

The interludes of actual democratic government have been few and far between in Central America except in democratic Costa Rica. Nevertheless, the peoples of the region have consistently shown a determination to gain control over their own political and social destinies.

In recent years they have been turning increasingly toward democracy as the most effective means of doing so. They have recognized it as a pragmatic problem-solving mechanism -- not just a political ideal suited only to wealthy, industrialized states.

The enemies of democracy, who are by extension enemies of the people of Central America, would have us believe that communism, or some form of undemocratic socialism, is the only form of government workable in Third World countries. They claim that expanding state control is the wave of the future.

This attitude is at odds with the basic aspirations of the Central Americans, and indeed, of people all over the world. President Reagan, speaking at Notre Dame University in May 1981, offered a prediction for the final outcome of the struggle between democracy and communism. He said:

"The West won't contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won't bother to dismiss or denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."

More recently, the President noted the progress of democracy throughout Latin America in his speech of May 9th. He pointed out:

"The people of Central America want democracy and freedom. They want and hope for a better future. Costa Rica is a well-established and healthy democracy. Honduras made a peaceful transition to democracy in 1982. And in Guatemala, political parties and trade unions are

functioning. An election is scheduled for July there, with a real prospect that that country can return to full constitutional government in 1985.

"In fact, 26 of 33 Latin American countries are democracies or striving to become democracies. But they are vulnerable."

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is the well known and frequently cited example of democracy in Central America. With Latin America's longest unbroken history of democratic, constitutional government, Costa Rica has long served as a theoretical model for government and development in Central America.

The country's 1949 Constitution contains a rigorous system of internal checks and balances. It incorporates reforms as Constitutional rights, proscribes the immediate re-election of the President (or any member of his family), and creates a Supreme Electoral Tribunal with the rank, power, and financial independence of a new "Fourth Branch" of government.

A measure of how well the document reflects Costa Rican political culture is the rigor with which its basic elements have been defended in practice.

Some say that Costa Rica is an anomaly in Central America; that its circumstances are so exceptional that it cannot serve as a model for other Central American countries. This argument is the same as the one that says that Latins are "not ready" for democracy.

Those are specious arguments. Mario Vargas Llosa, Peruvian novelist, addressed such notions in the following way:

"When an American or European intellectual -- or liberal newspaper or institution -- advocates for Latin American countries political options and methods he would never countenance in his own society [the Cuban example] he is betraying a fundamental doubt about the capacity of the Latin American countries to achieve the liberty and the respect for the rights of others that prevail in the Western democracies. In most cases, the problem is an unconscious prejudice, an inchoate sentiment, a sort of visceral racism, which these persons -- who generally have unimpeachable liberal and democratic credentials -- would sharply disavow if they were suddenly made aware of it."

For years Costa Ricans have been telling other Central Americans that there would be serious consequences unless Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua followed the tide of history and changed their behavior in certain very specific ways. Recently, we see some signs that those changes have begun to happen. To cite a few examples:

El Salvador

El Salvador is torn by social and political strife, ravaged by a communist insurgency supported by the USSR, Cuba, and Nicaragua, and suffering severe economic dislocations. Nevertheless, the moderate, democratic center survives and encourages the people to seek solutions to those problems through democratic institutions.

The conflict is frequently portrayed as a clash between extremes of left and right. The country's history provides ample data to support this perspective: social injustice, governmental irresponsibility, political repression, militarism, and brutal fanaticism sometimes in the name of "order," sometimes to "advance the revolution" and sometimes plain criminality.

Yet this view overlooks a vital new element: the reformist coup of October 1979 and subsequent coalition governments have created an alternative to the dilemma of choosing between the extreme left and extreme right -- an opportunity for genuinely democratic and progressive reform.

The proclamation of the armed forces issued on October 15, 1979, within hours of the coup by reformist military officers -- which overthrew the old regime and began El Salvador's search for a new, better future -- states as two basic goals:

"To create an environment favorable for the carrying out of truly free elections within a reasonable period of time" and

"To permit the organization of political parties of every ideology, in such a way as to strengthen the democratic system."

The emergence of this new democratic alternative did not, of course, eliminate the power of extremist factions of either left or right. But El Salvador's history since 1979 is fundamentally the story of how efforts to build democracy have fared against the weight of traditional problems and opposition from violent and radical extremes supported by hostile foreign powers.

It is the existence of this alternative that has made possible continued U.S. assistance to El Salvador. That assistance -- economic and military -- has been directed at bolstering the centrist democratic groups and their reform programs, at ending the violence, and at establishing the conditions necessary for a stable democracy.

With our help, the Government of El Salvador is implementing important economic, political and judicial reforms, including a far-reaching land reform. It is increasing the professionalism of its armed forces and is reducing all forms of human rights abuse committed by those forces.

It has just held direct popular elections for the presidency on March 25, 1984, with a run-off vote on May 5th. It did this in the midst of sustained violence from both right and left, including a guerrilla campaign supported by the Soviet bloc through Nicaragua.

In short, the government of El Salvador is hearing and responding to the voices of its people. With the continued aid of the U.S. against the Soviet and Cuban backed enemies of democracy, their voices will continue to make a difference.

Of critical concern to all of us, the government of El Salvador is investigating murders and disappearances of United States citizens in El Salvador and has instituted judicial proceedings in every case in which sufficient evidence has been obtained. President-elect Jose Napoleon Duarte has pledged to make this a priority of his administration,

Honduras

Honduras is another Central American country which has turned toward democracy. It is faced with a massive military buildup in Nicaragua, accompanied by repeated violations of the Honduran border by Sandinista troops and Sandinista-armed and trained subversives.

Only last November the Honduran army decimated a column of Cuban-trained guerrillas. The defeat of the guerrillas was made possible by the total lack of support the insurgents found among the campesinos. Several who turned themselves in were on the brink of starvation; no one would give them food.

The insurgents were, for the most part, tricked into becoming part of the column by false promises of technical training in Cuba. Once they arrived, the Cubans substituted terrorist training instead. Jose Martin Barahona, an 18 year old rural youth, said: "I gave myself up as soon as I was back in Honduras and could get away because I was never in agreement with their plans."

This shows the commitment of the Honduran people to democracy. After nearly twenty years of de facto rule by military regimes, civilian, constitutional rule was restored in Honduras in January 1982 following free and fair elections in November 1981. Civilians were named to head all ministries except defense.

The armed forces participate in Honduras' National Security Council as do all civilian ministers, but civilian President Roberto Suazo Cordova makes the final decisions, and they do not always accord with the views of the armed forces. The Honduran government has also begun a massive voter registration program to prepare for November 1985 presidential elections.

There is a completely free press and a labor movement considered to be a model for the Central American region. The Honduran budget gives higher priority to public works, education, and health programs than it does to military expenditures.

At every stage in the return to democratic rule, which began with constituent assembly elections in 1980, the United States has played a role in encouraging the restoration of democracy and discouraging those elements which sought to maintain de facto military rule. Democracy in Honduras is less fragile today than it was two years ago and the country continues along the democratic path.

Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, the "commandantes" have abandoned the original promise of the 1979 revolution which was so widely welcomed and firmly supported by the United States and other democratic countries.

Nicaragua stands out as the only Central American country not making any serious move toward democracy. Bent on installing a classic Marxist-Leninist regime, they have consistently sought to eradicate domestic opposition through intimidation, censorship, and spurious popular demonstrations.

Even the Marxist-Leninists who control the Nicaraguan government feel the need for a pretense of democracy. With their people demanding that they make good on their 1979 promises, the Sandinistas have announced elections for later this year. The promises have yet to be fulfilled, however, because the government clearly plans an electoral system weighted in favor of the self-elected ruling party.

Nevertheless, the democratic opposition valiantly struggles to preserve itself from extinction and maintains its faith in democratic institutions. A joint Communique of the Nicaraguan opposition stated on August 15, 1983:

"Central American stability will become a reality only when there is a truly democratic government in Nicaragua that will express the free will of the people of Nicaragua through free elections, the observance of freedom of the press, of religion, of thought, of speech, and of assembly, as well as the establishment of genuine social justice. A democratic government that would respond to the national interests of the Nicaraguan people and not the expansionist interests of the Soviet Union. A government that because of its democratic principles will guarantee peace, progress and development in the region."

From the San Jose Declaration of October 1982 to the Contadora 21 points of September 1983 democracy has been the consistently cited best means to guarantee peace and stability in Central America. In the words of President Luis Alberto Monge of

Costa Rica, "There can be no peace without liberty. Peace in Central America must cross over the bridge of democratic elections."

The National Endowment for Democracy

The United States is developing practical approaches to strengthening democracy. In his address to the British Parliament on June 8, 1982, President Reagan announced that the United States would begin a global effort to:

"foster the infrastructure of democracy ... which allows a people to choose their own way, to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means."

Congress took a major step toward this goal in November 1983 by agreeing to fund the private National Endowment for Democracy. The Endowment is a bipartisan, non-governmental, non-profit organization. Its purpose is to encourage free and democratic institutions throughout the world through private sector initiatives. It will work closely with the two major American political parties, the AFL/CIO and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The Endowment is a common sense, direct investment in people -- in future leaders, in education and training, and in international exchanges to develop political skills. This goes beyond reacting to crises. It involves the development of men and women with modern economic, technical and political skills.

This kind of investment in human capital will be particularly useful in Central America where political moderates are struggling to establish democratic institutions in the face of attacks from both right-wing extremists and Communist guerrillas.

In response to the National Bipartisan Commission recommendation that the U.S. expand economic assistance for democratic institutions and leadership training, the Administration has developed an action plan to strengthen democratic institutions and leadership in Central America and the Caribbean.

If funded by Congress, the plan will address leadership development through networking and training. It will also provide funding earmarked for National Endowment for Democracy Central American programs and activities and support the establishment of a Center for Democratic Studies in Costa Rica. Finally, it will increase the United States Information Agency (USIA) International Visitor Program for the region.

It would also grant additional funding to the regional Center for Electoral Advice and Promotion in Costa Rica; establish a Solidarity Fund to promote regional collaboration among democratic public and private sector leaders.

Existing Latin American and Caribbean Legislator Training and Reference Services for democratically elected Central American legislators and their staffs would be expanded as well as programs of USIA Binational Centers, including library holdings and English teaching courses.

Conclusion

All of our programs -- governmental and private -- recognize that the development of democracy in Central America depends upon the efforts of Central Americans themselves. Our efforts are intended to supplement theirs and counteract the activities of the extremists.

History shows that the initiative exists in the region and common sense dictates that no single model can apply to all situations. But, the basic concepts of democracy -- respect for the individual and human rights, free and fair elections, an open political process including a free press -- are universally applicable.

The U.S. has both the means and the obligation to assist those democratic elements in Central America -- and elsewhere -- who are willing to help themselves make democracy a functioning reality.

ENDNOTES

1. President Reagan's Address to the Nation on Central America, quoted in the New York Times 10 May, 1984 p. A16
2. Loren Jenkins, "Honduran Army Defeats Cuban-Trained Rebel Unit," Washington Post 22 November, 1983 pp. A1, A14
3. See also: Richard Araujo, "Backing Honduras, Taking a Stand for Democracy," Heritage Foundation Backgrounders No. February 1983.
4. The recent resignation of General Gustavo Alvarez has served only to underscore the subordination of the military to civilian rule.
5. President Luis Alberto Monge of Costa Rica, in conversation August 14, 1983 with Senator Paul Tsongas, Congressman Shannon, and journalists of the Boston Globe and Atlantic Monthly.

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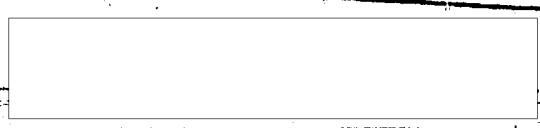
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MESSAGE NO. 993 CLASSIFICATION UNCLASSIFIED PAGES 8

FROM ROBERT M. KIMMITT, NSC (NAME) (EXTENSION) (ROOM NUMBER)

MESSAGE DESCRIPTION WHITE HOUSE DIGEST

TO (AGENCY) STATE	DELIVER TO: CHARLES HILL	DEPT/ROOM NO.	EXTENSION
	COL JOHN STANFORD		



REMARKS