

Leaks

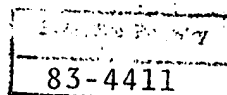
EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

Routing Slip

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Remarks:
 To 4 & 6: Please post on bulletin boards as appropriate.

[Signature]
 Executive Secretary
 8 September 83
 Date



THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

August 30, 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Unauthorized Disclosure of Classified Information

Recent unauthorized disclosures of classified information concerning our diplomatic, military, and intelligence activities threaten our ability to carry out national security policy. I have issued a directive detailing procedures to curb these disclosures and to streamline procedures for investigating them. However, unauthorized disclosures are so harmful to our national security that I wish to underscore to each of you the seriousness with which I view them.

The unauthorized disclosure of our Nation's classified information by those entrusted with its protection is improper, unethical, and plain wrong. This kind of unauthorized disclosure is more than a so-called "leak"--it is illegal. The Attorney General has been asked to investigate a number of recent disclosures of classified information. Let me make it clear that we intend to take appropriate administrative action against any Federal employee found to have engaged in unauthorized disclosure of classified information, regardless of rank or position. Where circumstances warrant, cases will also be referred for criminal prosecution.

The American people have placed a special trust and confidence in each of us to protect their property with which we are entrusted, including classified information. They expect us to protect fully the national security secrets used to protect them in a dangerous and difficult world. All of us have taken an oath faithfully to discharge our duties as public servants, an oath that is violated when unauthorized disclosures of classified information are made.

Secrecy in national security matters is a necessity in this world. Each of us, as we carry out our individual duties, recognizes that certain matters require confidentiality. We must be able to carry out diplomacy with friends and foes on a confidential basis; peace often quite literally depends on it--and this includes our efforts to reduce the threat of nuclear war.

We must also be able to protect our military forces from present or potential adversaries. From the time of the Founding Fathers, we have accepted the need to protect military secrets. Nuclear dangers, terrorism, and aggression similarly demand

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that we must be able to gather intelligence information about these dangers--and our sources of this information must be protected if we are to continue to receive it. Even in peacetime, lives depend on our ability to keep certain matters secret.

As public servants, we have no legitimate excuse for resorting to these unauthorized disclosures. There are other means available to express ourselves:

- We make every effort to keep the Congress and the people informed about national security policies and actions. Only a fraction of information concerning national security policy must be classified.
- We have mechanisms for presenting alternative views and opinions within our government.
- Established procedures exist for declassifying material and for downgrading information that may be overclassified.
- Workable procedures also exist for reporting wrongdoing or illegalities, both to the appropriate Executive Branch offices and to the Congress.

Finally, each of us has the right to leave our position of trust and criticize our government and its policies, if that is what our conscience dictates. What we do not have is the right to damage our country by giving away its necessary secrets.

We are as a Nation an open and trusting people, with a proud tradition of free speech, robust debate, and the right to disagree strongly over all national policies. No one would ever want to change that. But we are also a mature and disciplined people who understand the need for responsible action. As servants of the people, we in the Federal Government must understand the duty we have to those who place their trust in us. I ask each of you to join me in redoubling our efforts to protect that trust.

Ronald Reagan

NEW YORK

THE NOT-QUITE WAR

Michael Kramer From Central America

TIME TO PAY ATTENTION: CENTRAL AMERICA JUST won't go away. For better or worse—and often for worse—the United States has been intimately involved in the affairs of Central America for more than a century. Today, no one who is serious disputes that the region is within America's sphere of influence. Still, hegemony has its limits, and there are legitimate questions concerning the United States' proper role in the area. The debate is heating up, and the Reagan administration's plans for Central America are likely to become the dominant foreign-policy issue in the 1984 presidential campaign.

This much is given: Scarcely another region in the world knows greater poverty and inequality. Greed and neglect, much of it encouraged and abetted by the United States in the twentieth century, have spawned widespread discontent. In Nicaragua, where a dictator of unrivaled callousness and cruelty was finally overthrown in 1979, a self-proclaimed Marxist-Leninist regime now rules with an iron hand—a government willing and eager to spread its doctrines to its neighbors, by force if necessary and first in El Salvador.

No matter what one thinks of the domino theory, Central America is too close to have its future left to chance. In the United States, there is a growing awareness of the region, but confusion is still the common denominator. According to the polls, most Americans can't even identify which side the United States is on in the region's two major conflicts. Nevertheless, one principle controls: Americans don't want our boys fighting *their* war.

The politicians, and especially those in Congress, are as perplexed as the people—and even more scared. They're afraid for their political lives, afraid that their constituents will hold them responsible for “losing” Central America if they object too strongly to the president's prescriptions. Not the least of their concerns is their inability to figure out what “losing” the region actually means.

Reading the headlines doesn't clarify matters. On any given day, some “expert” is quoted saying the war in El Salvador is on the verge of being won, or perhaps lost. (The correct answer is “C: Neither.”) In Nicaragua, the counterrevolutionaries (or *contras*) are said to be either “growing” stronger or about to be trampled by the Sandinistas.

A close reading of the president's own statements doesn't help much, either. Ronald Reagan has welcomed a Sandinista “peace” overture—only to say later that peace can never be realized as long as the Sandinistas are in power. American

troops won't be sent to the area, says the president, but remember, he says later, presidents “never say ‘never.’”

“War scares,” “peace scares”—the media proclaim both, and someone somewhere is always threatening to “talk,” or “discuss,” or “negotiate,” or “dialogue.” All that's clear is that these terms mean radically different things depending on who's speaking.

Only the money can be quantified. For the four years ending in early 1983, United States aid to El Salvador, including loans, totaled \$1.3 billion, or \$260 for each of the nation's 5 million inhabitants. The administration still wants \$110 million in military assistance for El Salvador in the current fiscal year—a sum so paltry it would service the United States national debt for only eleven hours. Congress has agreed to \$81.3 million.

Central America is not a laboratory experiment or hypothetical case invented by a cloistered academic. It is a real place, a real problem. A visit to the region, to Nicaragua and El Salvador especially, and talks with the leaders on both sides help put the situation in perspective—and show that the administration's policy, so chaotic from afar, surprisingly seems more coherent and effective than expected. Here, then, is one view of a region not quite at total war, and an educated guess at what's going to happen down there.

CONTRA COUNTRY

THE ONLY MAP OF NICARAGUA I'VE SEEN THAT CLEARLY delineates Sarapiquí is produced by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Sarapiquí isn't a town. It's a place—an “elevation,” in military parlance—a clay mound with a commanding view of the San Juan River, which forms a stretch of the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Sarapiquí is on the edge of a dense jungle that consumes half the country. It is hot, humid terrain teeming with colorful parrots, wild boars, and poisonous snakes.

From the air or up close, Sarapiquí is the kind of desolate outpost familiar to all Americans old enough to have watched their army fight in Vietnam.

Sarapiquí is Pastora country, home of the “good-guy *contras*,” a group of former believers currently dedicated to ousting the Sandinistas from Nicaragua. They are led by Eden Pastora, 47, the greatest hero of the Nicaraguan revolution. Pastora isn't tall (about five feet seven), but he is pow-

Photograph by Susan Meiselas/Magnum.



CUMPLIREMOS LA REALIDAD

Augusto Sandino, hero of the Nicaraguan regime, memorialized at a celebration of the revolution.

erfully built. With his wavy black hair and strong face he has the look of a matinee idol—and the accompanying temperament. Four years ago, Pastora was the toast of Managua, everyone's favorite war hero, the George Patton of the Revolution, the man all Latin America knew by his *nom de guerre*, "Commander Zero." "We are the true Sandinistas," says Pastora, who hates the term "*contra*." "Those in Managua are Communists. We are the ones who believe in the original promises of the revolution. We are the exact opposite of the Marxist-Leninists who rule my country today."

Pastora is sitting in a makeshift headquarters. On his desk are his personal weapons: an AR-15 with a night scope, an M-79 grenade launcher, and a .45-caliber automatic pistol. Grenade paperweights hold down piles of memorandums. (The grenades are live.) Pastora is fond of saying that he "must join in the battle when the bullets fly," because it is "in my blood." In fact, his role is more like chief cheerleader: He welcomes new recruits and gives pep talks, either in person or via radio, but he rarely fights. He's the franchise. If he dies, the movement dies with him.

When Anastasio Somoza was defeated, the Sandinistas made Pastora deputy minister of defense. There was little for him to do. He was not trusted. "They were Marxists, and they knew I wasn't," he says. "They were scared of me because of



The "bad-guy contras," the F.D.N., operate in the north of Nicaragua with considerable C.I.A. support.

my popularity. Tomás Borge [probably the most powerful Sandinista leader] made me his daughter's godfather. They would invite me to their orgies and to their beer-drinking parties, and I could come, unannounced, to the meetings of the nine *comandantes*, but I was just for show." It took a while for Pastora to become disillusioned: "I kept thinking the moderates could gain control. I was naive."

When he finally left Nicaragua, Pastora wasn't silent for long. On April 15, 1982, he held a news conference in San José, Costa Rica. He told the Sandinistas to straighten up or else he would personally lead an army to Managua and drag them from "their Mercedes-Benzes and their mansions" and "bury them." By all accounts, Pastora had such a firm belief in his own popularity that he thought the Sandinistas would retreat. A year to the day later, with the Sandinistas showing no sign of moderation, Pastora announced that he was going to war. In the five months since, Pastora's ragtag collection of troops has grown from fewer than 400 to something over 2,000 men and women.

The political half of Pastora's effort is housed in Costa Rica and is headed by Alfonso Robelo, also 47, a graduate of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in Schenectady, New York, and a high-school classmate of Pastora's. Robelo was a mem-

ber of the first junta of the Sandinista government. To date, he is the regime's highest-ranking defector. "Things are a little different this time," says Robelo. "A good many of us businessmen, moderates mostly, helped to make the 1979 revolution—even though the Sandinistas say we were of little importance. When we won, we were easily dismissed by the new government because we had always been only the political side of the struggle. We had no weapons, and when it came time to set things up, it was the Sandinistas, the party, the F.S.L.N. [Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional], who had the monopoly on the guns and hence the power. They could kick us out at will. Now, even though Eden and I are close like brothers, I take no chances. I am in charge of the political side of our group, but people from my party, people who go way back with me, are also fighting inside with Eden. When we win, my people will have weapons and will have been a key part of the military victory. Just in case."

There is nothing sadder than an exile alone with his thoughts. Robelo's office attracts them in droves. They hang out in a shabby house in San José and talk to one another all day. By sundown, as in a game of "Telephone," the rumors have taken on gigantic proportions, and everyone seems convinced that Eden has had a miraculous success against the Sandinista army somewhere in the jungle—invariably, nothing from there has actually been heard.

Pastora himself makes no extravagant claims. Rather, he seems to have stepped out of *Annie*. Everything is going to happen "tomorrow." The "spectacular feats" he and Robelo promised for July 19, the fourth anniversary of the Sandinista revolution, never materialized. "Of course not," says Pastora. "The enemy was ready because I said that. I wouldn't be so foolish to have attacked then, when they were waiting."

"Well, when, then?"

"Tomorrow."

THE ONLY TANGIBLE GAIN BY PASTORA'S FORCES IN THE past five months has been their capture of the San Juan River itself—a filthy, shark-infested waterway of some strategic value. Cornelius Vanderbilt made a fortune off New Yorkers destined for California's gold rush by transporting them via the San Juan until the cross-continent route became cost-effective. The latest plan for the San Juan, this from the Soviets, is to build a new canal to rival Panama's.

For most of its length, the San Juan is in the hands of Tito Chamorro, one of Pastora's key commanders. Chamorro controls the river with five boats: "Tito's navy." Four of the boats are 30-foot-long Indian canoes with 35-horsepower Evinrude motors. Tito's flagship is a fifteen-foot skiff he bought second-hand in Panama. It is powered by a 150-horsepower Johnson Sea Horse motor: Three men must ride in the bow as counterweight when Tito screams upriver to Sarapiquí.

In the region where Tito is fighting, it is almost always the "rainy season," as understated a phrase as was ever coined. It seems as if someone turned on a faucet and went on vacation. "Isn't this just the best weather?" says Chamorro, who alternates between genuine U.S. Army jungle fatigues and a red-and-white T-shirt that says "Drink Coca-Cola" in Hebrew. "This is *our* weather, guerrilla weather. The Sandinistas can't bomb us, because the clouds are so low. We can move at will."

Most of Tito's days are consumed in setting up ambushes. The problem is that no one walks into them. The Sandinistas came to power as a guerrilla army, and they haven't made the mistake of converting to a conventional force. On the radio—everyone listens to everyone else in Nicaragua—the Sandinistas can be heard setting up their own ambushes. And no one walks into them either. So Tito's men spend a good deal of time cleaning their weapons. In monsoon warfare, the greatest enemy is rust.

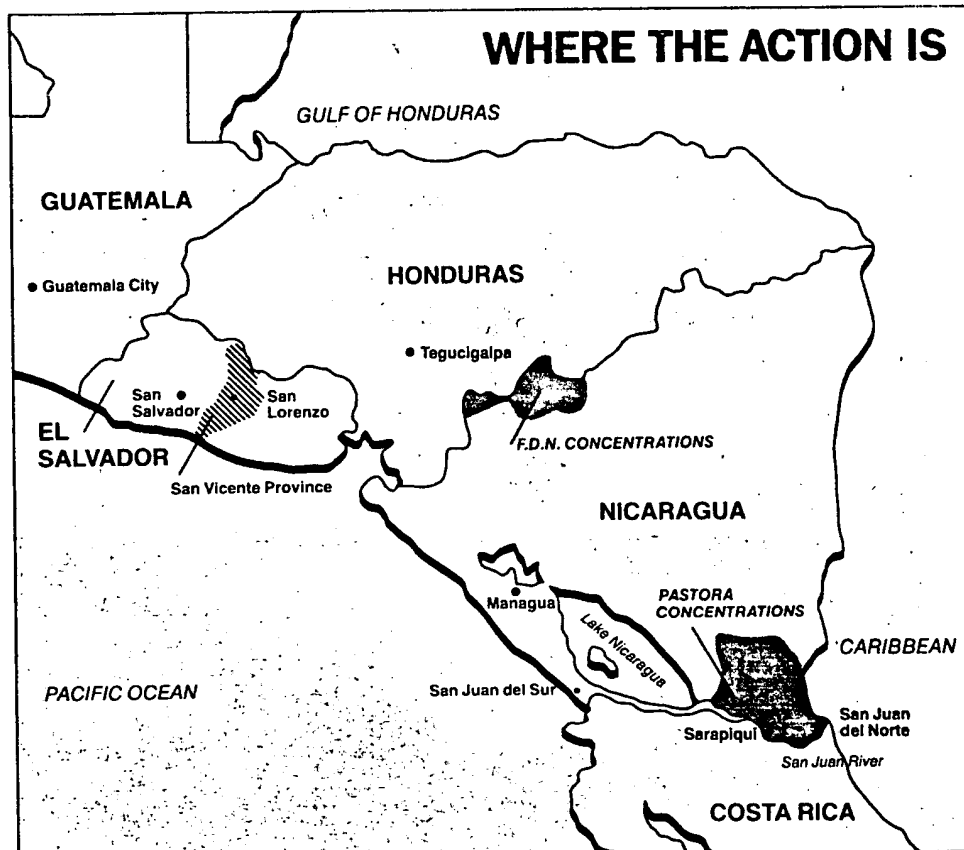
Most nights are spent sleeping in hammocks or working. During the time I was with Tito, a soldier named Peter who

had been to a series of American special-forces schools stayed up almost till dawn painstakingly translating into Spanish a U.S. Army manual for the 81-mm. mortar. Occasionally, Tito's troops are lucky enough to stay at base camps—broken-down shacks they call "hotels." In the jungle, the typical diet is whatever can be picked off trees. At the "hotels," there's rice and beans—and at the one I stayed in there was even an ancient battery-operated fifteen-inch black-and-white Sharp TV. Watching reruns of *The Munsters* was a high priority.

Women at the base camps extract oil from coconuts so the men can clean their guns. Ammunition doesn't grow on trees, but fighting is rare, so target practice is a must. On one of the days I spent with Tito, we came upon an unexploded Soviet air-to-ground rocket. It had been fired from a Sandinista plane a few weeks earlier during the only hours of clear weather anyone could remember. For 40 minutes, the men took turns trying to explode the stiletto-thin missile by firing from a distance of about 100 meters. No one came close.

The only Pastora operation actually scheduled for the Nicaraguan revolution's July 19 anniversary was an attempt to interfere with the television transmission of the speech made by Comandante Daniel Ortega, the coordinator of the Sandinista junta. A group of Pastora's men, including Alvaro Taboada, formerly the Sandinistas' ambassador to Ecuador, had backpacked sophisticated electronic jamming gear about 70 kilometers inside Nicaragua from the San Juan. "We were set up for Channel 2," says Taboada. "That's what was announced in the paper. But they switched to Channel 6, and we couldn't do anything."

IS THIS THE GANG THAT CAN'T SHOOT STRAIGHT? IT'S EASY to draw that conclusion but too early to say so definitively. Both Pastora's men, in the south of Nicaragua, and the other *contras*, in the north (the ones *totally* supported by the C.I.A.), have yet to engage the Sandinistas in any meaningful battle despite their combined strength of approximately 10,000 men. Nevertheless, the signs aren't good—and for Pastora the signs are particularly bad. "Eden had to prove three things when he challenged the Sandinistas," says Arturo Cruz, a former Sandinista ambassador to the United States who is himself in exile at the Inter-American Development Bank, in Washington. "He had to scare the Sandinistas into talking with him, because they feared his hold on the people. In that way he could pressure them to return to the original promises they made. Second, he had to convince the socialist countries that have been most



strong in supporting the Sandinistas that he is right about the betrayal of the revolution and that they should come out against it as it is now being conducted. Third, because of who he is, he had to precipitate defections from the Sandinista army. So far, he has done none of these."

Most galling to Pastora has been his inability to inspire defections from the Sandinista forces, despite talking to them almost every day on shortwave radio. In a surprise move—which means he lucked out—Pastora captured 37 Sandinista army troops a few months ago. Magnanimously, he released them all, declaring that they were free to return home or join him. Every single one went back. "It's because of the Cubans," says Pastora. "The Cubans are everywhere in Nicaragua, and they've got the soldiers scared that if they come over to me their families will be killed."

Pastora may be unpredictable and high-strung, but he is a whiz with excuses.

The *contras* in the north—they're called the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, or F.D.N.—have been fighting longer than Pastora (for more than a year), and they have considerable ties to the Somoza regime. Hence their reputation as the "bad-guy *contras*." "It's a bad rap," says Adolfo Calero, the former Coca-Cola manager in Managua, who is one of the F.D.N.'s eight "directors." Calero is right. It is a bad rap where he and most of the other directors are concerned. The problem, though, is that the directors are only the political face of the F.D.N. The guys with the guns—and especially the top brass—are former Somoza National Guardsmen. Not all the guardsmen were ax murderers,

Eden Pastora's troops, the "good-guy *contras*," wait in the jungled south for an enemy who rarely appears.



Photograph by Michael Kramer. Map by Karl Hartig.

but two of the five members of the *Estado Mayor*, the ruling military body of the F.D.N., really are bad guys. No matter how disenchanted the average Nicaraguan might be with the Sandinista leadership, it is hard to find anyone who would trade them in for the F.D.N.

In the hope of polishing the group's image, the United States has been eager to have Pastora combine with the F.D.N. "No," says Pastora. "I won't do it. The historic error of the gringos has been to put the clean and the dirty together in the same thing and believe the clean is going to clean up the dirty. It works the other way around."

NOT LONG AGO, THOUGH, PASTORA DID TRY TO DEAL with the F.D.N. He wanted to fight from the north—infinitely easier from a military standpoint than from the southern jungle—and he wanted to command a joint force. The deal fizzled for many reasons, not the least of which was Washington's fear that Pastora is a closet Marxist who only turned on his revolutionary comrades out of personal pique. ("I don't even know what the *outside* of a Marxist textbook looks like," says Pastora. "I want Nicaragua to be a democracy like Costa Rica. The only thing I have in common with Fidel Castro is that we were both taught by the Jesuits.")

"Actually," says Robelo, "it's just as well. It would have been the kiss of death. All Eden has is his independence. We own ourselves. We take from the Americans, too [about half of Pastora's monthly budget of approximately \$450,000 comes



from U.S. intelligence sources), but what we take we take without strings. The other guys are puppets. The F.D.N. is a wholly owned subsidiary of the C.I.A. Everyone knows this," continues Robelo. "The people inside Nicaragua know it—and they remember, too, the previous times we were invaded by the United States in order to 'save' us. Ours is a country where the worst regime, the Somoza rule of over 40 years, was tied so closely to the United States that on the 20-cordoba bill there was a picture of the dictator shaking hands with the American ambassador. There is a revolution in Nicaragua now. It has been betrayed, but it is still a revolution. The F.D.N. reminds people of the repression of the past. For us to combine with them would ruin whatever chance we have to win."

If Pastora and the F.D.N. ever do ally, it will be a marriage consummated out of weakness rather than strength. For Pastora, the reasoning will be simple: What good is it to remain pure and independent if such a stance doesn't pay off with support inside Nicaragua?

Even if there is a merger, each side is certain to believe that it will be able to dispense with the other in the event of victory.

Pastora said as much to me in July: "If by some miracle we do get together, it will only be tactical. And I have no doubt that the troops of the F.D.N.—not the *Estado Mayor*, but the troops—will come over to me when the time is ripe and I call for them. That will leave the F.D.N. without Indians. The chiefs will have no power."

To Pastora sympathizers like Arturo Cruz who abhor the notion of combining with the F.D.N., there is another way. "What needs to happen," says Cruz, "is for the F.D.N. to somehow begin to do well. If the F.D.N. can score some successes, then perhaps the Sandinista army, fearing an F.D.N. victory, will come over to Eden in order to stop the F.D.N." "It is not so bad a plan," says Pastora. "That might in the end be the only way to do it. Or maybe things would get so bad for the Communists that they would go back to what was promised to the people. We wouldn't have to come to power. We could force a change in their policies by our military victories. We could be like in *The Godfather*, make them an offer they can't refuse."

THE BELIEF THAT SUSTAINS BOTH PASTORA AND THE F.D.N. is the knowledge that guerrilla wars often turn around when least expected—and no one knows this better than the Sandinistas themselves. William Leurs was the United States ambassador to Venezuela at the time of the Sandinista victory. He is one of the most astute observers of Latin America, and he was intimately involved in America's on-again, off-again efforts to oust Somoza before a

total Sandinista victory. "We had a major meeting in San José in the late spring of 1979," recalls Leurs. "All the chiefs of mission in the region gathered, along with the C.I.A. and other intelligence services. This was only a few months before the Sandinista victory, and yet the overwhelming consensus at the meeting was that there was no way the Sandinistas could win, that Somoza was going to hang on. Then it turned, something sparked the people to join in the fight, and it was over very quickly."

American policymakers eager for the Sandinistas to meet Somoza's fate latch on to such history with a passion. But the two situations are

vastly different. Anastasio Somoza was a man easy to despise. Unless you were in his employ there was literally nothing redeeming about his regime. Those Nicaraguans who actively toppled Somoza—and their numbers are as inflated as the number of Brooklynites who swear they were at Ebbets Field when the Dodgers finally won the World Series in 1955—have a sense that *they* made the revolution. No matter how flawed it has since become, it is theirs, it is something to belong to.



In a static-filled war of words over shortwave radio, contra leader Edén Pastora (above, in a high-school photo) argues almost daily with Sandinista troops.

LIFE WITH THE SANDINISTAS

INSIDE NICARAGUA, THE SENSE OF BELONGING TO SOMETHING bigger than oneself is the outstanding fact of life—and the *contras* reinforce that feeling. "The sense of danger and tension has helped to consolidate the revolution," says Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock, who is one of the nine *comandantes* who rule Nicaragua. "To tell the truth," adds Rita Delia Casco, another former Sandinista ambassador to the United States, now with the Nicaraguan

Photograph, left: Michael Kramer.

Planning Ministry. "we were getting flabby. We were being worn out. Now we are united again."

The Sandinistas imposed a "state of emergency" a year and a half ago. At that time, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, the editor of *La Prensa*, declared it "an experiment in totalitarianism." If the people "take it calmly, if they don't scream." Pedro Joaquín told me in Managua, "then it will be with us forever and will define our lives for as long as the Sandinistas are in power. I don't think we're like the Cubans. We won't knuckle under." Chamorro was wrong. *La Prensa* itself is heavily censored (it is permitted to remain open only so the Sandinistas can present a moderate façade), and the regime has been having a propaganda field day. Almost everyone has bought the line. Almost everyone says life would be better if only the *contras* and the United States "would just leave us alone."

Life in Nicaragua today is hardly anyone's dream. In many respects, the nation is already classically eastern-European. A great deal of work has been done in the areas of education and health care—and few, if any, people are starving—but liberty is severely restricted. Even the literacy campaign has been made to serve the party. Students are organized into Sandinista support groups, and they regularly sing a national anthem that says, "We're fighting against the yanqui, the enemy of humanity." In math class, simple arithmetic problems often begin with introductions like "Public health is a constant preoccupation of our People's Sandinista Revolution. How many . . . ?"

Political parties other than the ruling F.S.L.N. exist in name only. "Democratism," says the F.S.L.N., is "bourgeois." So, too, is freedom of expression. By law, "verbal or written diffusion of expression, proclamations or manifestos which attempt to injure popular interests and abolish the conquest achieved by the people" are punishable by prison terms.

To be aloof in Nicaragua is a bygone luxury. "You must be actively with the revolution," says Carlos Fernando Chamorro, editor of the F.S.L.N. newspaper, *Barricada*. "To be neutral is to be against." (Carlos Fernando is the brother of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of *La Prensa*. On almost every issue, the two brothers are 180 degrees apart. Nevertheless, they speak regularly and take fishing trips together.)

IF YOU *are* NEUTRAL OR ALOOF IN NICARAGUA, EVERYONE knows about it. Almost every block in every town in the country has its own spy system. The block organizations are called Committees for the Defense of Sandinism (C.D.S.), and they are modeled on Fidel Castro's Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. They "protect" their neighborhoods by watching for suspicious behavior, and they can detain and arrest whomever they wish. Those active in the revolution participate in the C.D.S.'s "night watch" program. Anyone out late at night is noted. Inactive citizens are noted.

"The C.D.S. is well structured and very thorough," says Regina Picasso, who until last year helped develop new housing for the regime. "We planned the new construction and allocated some of the old. Cuban advisers were with us constantly—they are everywhere—and together we made sure that certain people didn't live near certain others. And every new block had to have a state security agent and his family living in it. That agent was the link to the C.D.S."

Almost every consumer good is rationed in Nicaragua. For example, citizens are entitled to a pound of sugar and half a pound of rice per week and a roll of toilet paper per person per month. The C.D.S. allots ration cards. Those who haven't demonstrated sufficient revolutionary spirit often find themselves with diminished allotments, no matter how much they are "officially" permitted.

Even with the ration system—and an acceptable revolutionary consciousness—it is sometimes impossible to obtain the legal share. One woman I spoke with had waited for meat for over four hours one day only to find that there was none left because an army officer had come in through the back



"These beasts won't return," screams the Sandinista party paper in an article about leaders of the F.D.N.

door to purchase 50 pounds. The store's supply was wiped out. The army is a privileged class.

Any ranking Sandinista will tell you that the shortages (which cannot be reported in the press) are the result of more equitable distribution. "There are lines in Managua; and not enough to go around," says Carlos Fernando Chamorro, "because the people in the countryside are finally sharing in the goods." Chamorro doesn't lie more than other top Sandinistas. He is about typical: "What is true," says a Sandinista minister, "is what serves the ends of the revolution." For all of this, there is one redeeming reality: The streets of Nicaragua are safe—in marked contrast to El Salvador, where murder is common and everyone seems to be packing a gun.

SAN JUAN DEL SUR IS A SMALL FISHING VILLAGE ON THE Pacific coast about 90 miles south of Managua. It is the "countryside" Carlos Fernando speaks about. San Juan del Sur is fairly representative of Nicaraguan life outside Managua—the capital city having about as much in common with the rest of the nation as Manhattan has with the rest of the United States. The Soviets are going to build a dry dock there, but they haven't arrived yet; the hotel being readied for them is a month away from being completely refurbished. About the only food available in the stores is rice and beans. The problem isn't inequitable distribution. It's lack of production.

Work in San Juan del Sur is at a virtual standstill. On the day I was there the first ship in seven months had just put into port. It was flying a Panamanian flag, and it was unloading sugar from Guatemala. Nicaragua, long one of the wealthiest nations in Latin America in terms of natural resources and fertile land, has now found it necessary to import. "The red and the black, the red and the black," says Sebastian Lanza, a 100-year-old peasant, referring to the Sandinista colors. "Ever since the revolution, we have been importing. Before we only exported. It is bad." Lanza is typical of his generation—

that is, everyone over 35 in Nicaragua. The older people, who've seen it all, appear nearly unanimous in condemning the revolution. The younger Nicaraguans (and almost 70 percent of the citizenry is under 35) are still supportive.

Ernesto Gutierrez, 27, is a stevedore in San Juan del Sur. Between boats Gutierrez is permitted to borrow 500 cordobas (between \$8 and \$50, depending on the exchange rate). It is a government loan. It is all he has to live on until the next ship comes in, and then he must pay it back out of his wages. Still, Gutierrez is a believer. "It will all be okay once the *contras* are defeated," he says. "What we did four years ago was something great."

People live and work in Nicaragua without belonging to the F.S.L.N., but the adequacy of life and the quality of work improve greatly if they *do* belong. And party membership is often a requisite for survival for the self-employed. Trena, 58, has spent his entire life as a fisherman in San Juan del Sur. "But I must give it up now," he says. "I will go into agriculture [every Latin *campesino*, or peasant, describes himself as being "in agriculture"]. My boat is broken. I need to get it fixed, but I can't get a loan from the bank, because I don't belong to the [party] cooperative. That's the way it is."

That is not the way it is supposed to be. The Sandinistas are fond of touting their "mixed economy." They say that 60 percent of the means of production is in private hands—a figure widely accepted by the foreign press. As an *accurate* statistic, however, this figure has about as much relation to reality as the *contras*' claim that victory is just around the corner. Alfredo Cesar is the man who first propagated the 60 percent figure, back in 1981. Until last year, when he fled to Costa Rica after having lost all hope for his Sandinista comrades, Cesar was in charge of Nicaragua's economy. "To believe in that figure today is to believe there have been no expropriations since 1981," says Cesar. "Which is nonsense. The figure is probably closer to 35 percent now, but even that is meaningless. Most businesses—all that I know of—borrow funds from banks. In Nicaragua, the banks are all owned by the state, which also tells most businessmen what they can produce, how much of it they can turn out, how many workers they must have, how much those workers can be paid, and how much they can sell their products for. Nothing is left to be *private* about. That's why there's no incentive and why the economy has gone to hell."

THE GREATEST MYTH ABOUT NICARAGUA IS THAT THE Sandinistas' turn to the left is the result of American hostility. There are many people outside Nicaragua, and particularly in the United States, who believe that Ronald Reagan is to blame for the regime's avowed Marxism-Leninism. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Unlike Cuba, where Fidel Castro kept his real intentions hidden until well after he overthrew Batista, the Sandinistas—for anyone who cared to read—have always been up-front about their orientation.

Right from the start—in a report to a special party conference after only two months in power—the Sandinistas came clean: They were just pretending to be pluralist. They described the totalitarian state they were building and vowed that their power would never be put to risk in free elections. They said, too, that they were committed to a world revolution under Soviet leadership, but that it was necessary to conceal their commitment in order to get financial help from the imperialists. The first junta, which included two moderates, was described as "an alliance of convenience . . . to thwart Yankee intervention. . . . It was necessary to negotiate with the bourgeoisie, just to give some representation to people with a patriotic reputation."

Later, Daniel Ortega, one of the nine *comandantes*, declared that the Sandinistas were "profoundly anti-imperialist, anti-Yankee and Marxist-Leninist." The temporary alliance with the moneyed, said Ortega, is "exclusively tactical. We have accepted the collaboration of the middle class . . . but at any



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hough the church seems uneasy with Sandinista rule, some nuns joined the revolutionary celebrations in July.

moment we can take its factories without firing a single shot." Elections planned for 1985 (and still scheduled), said Ortega, "will in no way—like a lottery—decide who is going to hold power. For this power belongs to the F.S.L.N., to our Directorate." (Since an election would help calm international distress with the Sandinistas, it's curious that the regime doesn't simply hold one ahead of schedule, especially with an overwhelming victory almost certain. The most intriguing analysis I heard was offered by a European diplomat in Managua: "If they have an election, then one of the nine *comandantes* would have to be president. There's just too much jealousy among them to settle on the candidate.")

WASHINGTON HEARD THE SANDINISTAS' EARLY rhetoric but still thought it could turn things around. During the revolution's first year, the United States increased its economic aid to Nicaragua and even offered to train the Sandinista army in Panama (an offer that was rejected in favor of military aid from Cuba and the Soviet Union). American assistance was suspended (while Jimmy Carter, not Ronald Reagan, was president) only after it became evident that the Sandinistas were actively aiding the guerrillas in El Salvador.

Since the Sandinistas' victory in 1979, the regime has received increased shipments of arms from, among others, Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, and the P.L.O. Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto has pledged "the firm solidarity of [Nicaragua] with the struggle of Syria and the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine against Zionist aggression supported by U.S. imperialism."

What most bothers the United States—and the entire region as well—is the Sandinistas' continued commitment to a revolution "without frontiers." Here is Sandinista interior minister Tomás Borge, the regime's strongman: "The revolution's moral imperative and historical character make it

inevitable that the energies released here will be universal in all Central America."

"I well remember the first time I heard the *comandantes* discuss the export of the revolution," says Alfredo Cesar. "As the person in charge of the economy, I had to report to them on a regular basis. In the fall of 1980, I was at a meeting of the *comandantes* at their conference place, which had been Somoza's bachelor pad. Aside from the ideological imperative, it was made very clear to me that the *comandantes* felt they had to have friendly regimes in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala in order to secure sufficient markets for Nicaraguan goods. We could always sell farther afield, they said, but if we were to be a net exporter, it was clear to them that we had to have ready markets next door."

Those who dismiss the Sandinistas' extraterritorial-revolution rhetoric are deluding themselves. When Comandante Baryardo Arce says "We will never give up supporting our brothers in El Salvador," he means it. And Sandinista defense minister Humberto Ortega is equally serious when he says, "Of course we are not ashamed to be helping El Salvador. We would like to help all revolutions."

In practice, such words have translated into supplying the Salvadoran guerrillas with whatever they need. (And the guerrilla high command operates from a headquarters in Managua.) The Sandinistas never admit the shipment of arms in so many words, but junta member Sergio Ramirez made the point to me quite clearly: "We are something like world champions at moving contraband. We did it constantly during our own revolution. Every Sandinista knows how to do it. Our government, as a government, is not engaged in this activity." No wonder: If every Sandinista knows how to move arms, then the government, as a government, doesn't have to do it.

By all accounts, the actual arms flow from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas is today little more than a trickle. The guerrillas, it seems, have all the weapons they need. Medicine and money, however, are still required. (Thanks to a series of brilliant kidnappings, the Salvadoran guerrillas almost never hurt for funds in the 1970s. But a bad financial decision—investing in Mexican pesos rather than American dollars—has recently depleted their bank balance. Ammunition, too, is a constant necessity; there isn't a single factory in Central America capable of producing a bullet's brass casing. These items are being sent from Nicaragua—as the Salvadoran guerrillas have boasted—via a sophisticated network of light planes, small boats, false-bottomed trucks, and even donkeys: "A single donkey," says an American military adviser in El Salvador, "can carry enough arms to sustain a ten-man guerrilla unit for a month."

No matter the exact extent of the Sandinistas' exports today, they have made it very clear that they will help in El Salvador whenever necessary.

EL SALVADOR: UNDER THE VOLCANO

THE DEPARTMENT OF SAN VICENTE LIES 35 MILES EAST of San Salvador. It is 480 square miles of sugar, cotton, and coffee *fincas*. Viewed on a map, it looks like the continent of South America. It is El Salvador's richest province and one of the hardest hit during the four-year guerrilla war—a conflict that has cost the country an estimated \$600 million in damage to the economic infrastructure and up to \$1 billion in capital flight. Guerrilla sabotage has left most towns in San Vicente without electricity or water for nearly three years. Communication between towns is a thing of the past. The telephone lines are hit as regularly as the power poles.

If El Salvador's government is to win its war against the guerrillas it must make San Vicente habitable—which is exactly what it is finally trying to do. After months of wrangling, the Salvadoran government has finally adopted a "made in America" rural-pacification plan reminiscent of the

CORDS program in Vietnam—with one crucial difference. In Vietnam, pacification meant moving people from their villages to more easily defended "strategic hamlets." In El Salvador, the flow is the other way. The government is trying to coax people out of their refugee camps and back to their towns. The army, meanwhile, is supposed to secure the villages and train an indigenous civil-defense force that can assume the army's role when it moves on. It is a slow process. The refugee camps offer food, shelter, electricity, water, and security. The only thing the people have at home is what they own, and most of that has likely been destroyed. "The Plan," as it is universally known, became effective June 10. Since then, some 16.8 kilometers of roads have been repaired, and 40 of the 120 schools closed by the war have been reopened. The people are beginning to notice.

San Lorenzo is a hillside farming and weaving town typical of San Vicente's villages. It has been attacked countless times. Grass grows in cobbled streets, and the adobe homes are pockmarked by bullets and covered with guerrilla slogans. "It used to be so nice here," says one resident. "We used to have a sugar mill, water, and electricity. The bus came four times a day. Now we have to walk five miles to get one."

The army arrived to pacify San Lorenzo on July 9, only hours after a guerrilla column had passed through. Reporters who visited San Lorenzo in mid-July found the people skeptical. "The soldiers are here because you are here," said Olympia Campo Hernandez. "They will leave when you press leave." When I spoke with Olympia three weeks later, she was almost ecstatic. "The army is still here," she said. "They send a water truck every day. I can sell bread to the soldiers and get money to buy flour. The townspeople are working on the roads. Maybe we'll have electricity soon."

DON'T BET THE RENT. WHEN THE GUERRILLAS FLED THE army's June advance, the government all but declared the war won—just as it had last summer, shortly before the military was so badly battered that the Reagan administration feared for the imminent collapse of the government. Among those with a keener appreciation of guerrilla tactics (they typically regroup during the summer rainy season), a more cautious attitude prevails. "We expect them back," says Colonel Rinaldo Golcher, head of "The Plan." When I spoke with him a few weeks ago, Golcher seemed to agree with the guerrilla leader who said, "At this stage we are like a snake that has swallowed a calf. We are digesting."

Digesting or not, the guerrillas have already found time to strike back. At about the time I was speaking with Golcher, a construction crew repairing downed power lines was ambushed by a large guerrilla force. Thirty people were killed or wounded (and in El Salvador, where medical assistance is hard to come by, half of those wounded will likely die). "They know that San Vicente is the showcase for 'The Plan,'" says Golcher. "They have to attack it to destroy our credibility."

Attack is easy. San Vicente City and many of the department's towns are ringed around the Chichontepec volcano. The volcano is guerrilla heaven. "We know they're up there, but we can't get the army to go after them," says an American military adviser in El Salvador. "The army knows they'd suffer greatly in the attempt." Instead, the soldiers wait. But they don't stand still. In a significant change from last year, the Salvadoran military is no longer a nine-to-five outfit. The troops even venture out from their heavily fortified garrisons, something that rarely happened in the past. Ten-man patrols are now regularly seen in the fields, and *espíritu* is high. American trainers of the new "hunter battalions" have conferred black berets on elite units, and they are quite the rage. Still, fewer than 40 percent of the soldiers re-enlist, and there is little real pursuit in guerrilla territory, despite near-certain knowledge of the enemy's whereabouts. In many respects, the army's policy is still "search and evade." What "saves these guys," says an American soldier advising on "The Plan," "is



His face not photographed, for security reasons, an American military adviser in El Salvador instructs a government soldier.

that the guerrillas aren't such good fighters, either. I've seen tougher gangs in Chicago. Every day I thank God that the guerrillas here aren't the Vietcong. If they were, the country would be gone by now."

MORE TROUBLESOME EVEN THAN THE MILITARY'S questionable ability to withstand a new rebel offensive is the quality of the civil-defense force the army is supposed to leave behind as it moves from one town to the next. There aren't enough rifles to equip the units adequately, and there are no radios at all. In Vietnam, the "strategic hamlets" had excellent communications gear. They could summon help in a hurry. That isn't possible in El Salvador. "We don't even have enough radios for the regular army," says Colonel Golcher.

The composition of the civil-defense units is an even bigger problem. Many members admit to having been members of the ultra-rightist death squads, whose philosophy is simple: Better dead than arrested. It is also feared that too many civil-defense commanders will turn out to be psychopathic mini-versions of Manuel Portillo.

Sergeant Manuel Portillo ran civil defense in the town of Apastepeque, El Salvador. He is gone now, but he is remembered as the man who shot or hacked to death at least twenty townspeople during his tenure as local militia commander. The mayor of Apastepeque told the Miami *Herald's* Sam Dillon that he didn't know why Portillo killed his victims—all of whom were clearly innocent of any wrongdoing: "He would come by my office and say 'I have such a desire to kill someone today.' People in my office would say, when he left, 'I wonder who'll be next.'"

It turns out that Sergeant Portillo passed most days dead drunk. And given the craziness that defines life in El Salvador, it is not surprising that many Apastepeque residents are most upset about the palm trees their sergeant destroyed. It seems that Portillo's office was on the town square and that whenever he had the urge for a coconut he'd simply shoot one

down. After a while the chlorophyll-producing fronds were gone: Apastepeque now has a typically Latin central square surrounded by dead palm trees.

Even those civil-defense men who have a better check on their emotions than Sergeant Portillo may be a problem. They are being trained hastily in both military matters and "human-rights awareness," as an American official bureaucratically puts it. When one C.D. man was asked what "human rights" meant to him, he hesitated: "Let me see now. It's been a long time since the training. Oh yeah. That's when you have a man and a woman and you don't kill them."

Would that this fellow were aberrant. In fact, El Salvador is still a hellish place to live. The country is at war, but more people die by murder than in combat. And most murders are "tic-tac" jobs—the hip Salvadoran term for machete killings. The murders are committed mostly by right-wing vigilantes, and the number is up since last year. Yet only in El Salvador do you find people who say, "Yes, that's true, but they're better at choosing their targets. Less wanton killing is taking place."

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM IN EL SALVADOR STILL STINKS. Close to 40,000 people have been murdered in the past four years. Only 200 people have been convicted. Even George Shultz, by profession a supporter of El Salvador, is appalled. "You cannot get me to sit here and defend what happens under the judicial system in El Salvador," the American secretary of state told a congressional committee. "I won't do it."

Two weeks ago, a Salvadoran criminal court sentenced the commander of a civil-defense unit to 30 years in prison for murdering a seminary student. It was the first time a military man had been convicted of a human-rights violation since 1979. Most soldiers get off scot-free. The killer of the American nuns, well known in El Salvador, is still not convicted. The officer responsible for murdering two American officials in broad daylight at San Salvador's Sheraton Hotel in 1981 is also known: He has red hair and a red mustache—extremely rare in El Salvador. For his lineup, he dyed his hair and shaved off his mustache. The witnesses couldn't identify him, and the court refused an appeal based on the soldier's altered appearance. (Because of the war, the army has the power to move on its own in such investigations. A Salvadoran colonel was asked why the military couldn't correct the obvious injustice in the Sheraton case. He explained that the army's special powers could not be used for "common crimes, and murder is a common crime in El Salvador.")

It never ends. The officer responsible for killing eighteen innocent civilians has recently been promoted. His superior, also implicated, is beyond reach because he is a relative of a member of the Supreme Court. "There used to be a time," said President Alvaro Magaña to an American Embassy aide, "when the president could call the Supreme Court and say 'Get him.' No more."

No more indeed. When I spoke with President Magaña last year, he made it very clear that his power was limited. When I asked if the army should be subordinate to civilian authority, a relatively simple question in my mind, Magaña said he could not answer.

With the help of then U.S. ambassador Deane Hinton, Magaña was installed by the military as president in order to thwart a genuine evil—Roberto d'Aubuisson. D'Aubuisson is believed responsible for the 1980 murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero. And he founded the White Warriors Union, a death squad infamous for having once threatened to execute every Jesuit in El Salvador, in conformity with its slogan: "Serve your country, kill a priest." D'Aubuisson is now president of the Constituent Assembly, and he is a leading candidate for the presidency when the next election is held, in the spring of 1984.

The other top candidate is José Napoleón Duarte, who had been denied the presidency by the army in 1972 and who finally got the job in a compromise before the 1982 elections

resulted in Magaña's installation. To d'Aubuisson and his followers, Duarte's support of reforms like land redistribution makes him a Communist. Duarte has promised that if elected he will get a handle on extralegal violence, and there are those who seriously think the army would kick him out again if he tried—even though such an act would surely mean the end of American assistance to El Salvador.

IT IS HARD TO SAY IF THE GUERRILLAS ARE TRULY UN-popular in El Salvador—the *campesinos* smile at anyone with a gun. But people on both the left and right agree that by attacking the economy the guerrillas have lost whatever widespread following they may once have had.

If the guerrillas really are losing support with the population, the army may yet win. "This is war on the cheap," says Colonel John Waghelstein, until recently the head of the U.S. Military Group in El Salvador. "This is total war at the grass roots. The key to success is popular support. In addition to it being nice to have the people on your side, it yields intelligence. And in a guerrilla war, three things matter most: intelligence, intelligence, and intelligence."

It may seem surprising, but even Ronald Reagan's staunchest critics share his fear of an El Salvador ruled by the guerrillas. Here is Congressman Steven Solarz, who delights in beating up on the president's Central American policy: "I have no doubt," Solarz told William F. Buckley Jr. in May, "... that if the government of El Salvador collapsed and the guerrillas came to power militarily, you would have in El Salvador precisely the same kind of government you now have in Nicaragua, and I think that's something we ought to try to prevent." Solarz went on to explain why he favors a "power sharing" agreement with the guerrillas, but he and his like-minded colleagues are forgetting who really wields power on the left. It is easy to look at the moderate democrats who form the guerrillas' political front and to conclude that they are responsible men who favor a pluralistic society. Such a reading would be correct, but it ignores Mao's injunction: Power grows out of the barrel of a gun. The moderates in the guerrilla coalition aren't carrying guns.

THE GUERRILLAS WHO *do* HAVE THE GUNS HAVE MADE their position clear. As to where the democrats would be if the guerrillas won in El Salvador, here is Joaquín Villalobos, currently the top military commander of the guerrillas: "We are not advocates of the traditional concept of unity. . . . An ample criterion must prevail so as to allow the revolutionary forces to win over the democratic ones." In other words, if a moderate ever is installed as president of El Salvador, he will be as subservient to the military of Joaquín Villalobos as Alvaro Magaña is to the present Salvadoran army.

What would a Villalobos-led government be like? Well, says José Rodríguez Ruiz, a member of the rebels' directorate, "there are parts of Ho Chi Minh, parts of Mao, parts of Kim Il Sung [North Korea's premier] that appeal to us."

Would the Salvadoran guerrillas be content with El Salvador? Not hardly. The late Cayetano Carpio spoke for all his military comrades when, in 1980, he said, "The revolutionary process in Central America is a single process. The triumphs of one are the triumphs of the others. Guatemala will have its hour. Honduras its. Costa Rica, too, will have its hour of glory. The first note was heard in Nicaragua."

A few weeks ago in San Salvador, 3,000 peasants appeared outside the Constituent Assembly to protest a gutting of the land-reform program. They were denied permission to speak with the legislators—at the very same time that the assembly was approving a flowery constitutional provision guaranteeing the right of free expression. Incongruities like these, to say nothing of the daily murders, are commonplace in El Salvador—so it's tempting to give up on the current government. But some progress is being made, so before doing so, it is wise to consider the alternative.

Photograph by John Hoagland/Gamma-Liaison.

SYMMETRY, MADNESS, AND BEYOND

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HAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?

It seems as if every nation in the world has a peace plan for Central America—and a catchy name like "Contadora" to go along with it. If there ever is a negotiated settlement, it is possible that one of these initiatives will play a role—but only because the major protagonists will have concluded that such a convention fits their public-relations requirements. In the end, it will be the people at risk and their immediate sponsors who will resolve the conflict—one way or the other.

Today, the key players all have good reasons to both talk and fight—which is why "stalemate" best describes the state of play. Consider the antagonists' positions, beginning with the Salvadoran guerrillas, whose leaders have been particularly successful at feigning interest in negotiations.

Ruben Zamora is the chief spokesman for the Salvadoran guerrillas. At one time, he was a Christian Democrat and an aide to José Napoleón Duarte. Then, on the night of February 22, 1980, as Zamora was meeting with Duarte in San Salvador, a right-wing death squad broke in. Zamora's brother Mario was singled out, taken into a bathroom, and shot dead. That's what radicalized Ruben Zamora.

I ran into Zamora in the San José, Costa Rica, airport. He



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s part of "The Plan," an effort to win the support of the people, the Salvadoran government has been passing out food.

was working a crossword puzzle as he waited to fly to Colombia for his oft postponed meeting with Richard Stone, Ronald Reagan's special Central American envoy. As usual, Zamora was impeccably dressed. He is probably the only man in all of Latin America who regularly wears three-piece suits. I asked if the peace negotiations with the United States would be going anywhere, or if they were simply cosmetic. Zamora, who loves to affect American gestures, closed his right fist and shook his arm vigorously up and down, mimicking masturbation. I asked if the guerrillas would participate in next year's elections in El Salvador. "No way, man," said Zamora. "We'd lose."

Left to their own devices, the Salvadoran guerrillas would simply continue their war. They don't want to negotiate, because they don't believe "The Plan" can work and because they have yet to lose a battle to the Salvadoran army. They fear elections not simply because they would lose but because

an electoral wipeout could relegate them to international-outlaw status; they could forfeit the recognition of countries like Mexico and France, and their yearly draw of approximately \$2 million from American sympathizers would surely dwindle. So the guerrillas' personal position is clear. The question is whether their patrons will permit them to continue to fight.

The Nicaraguan Sandinistas are the Salvadoran guerrillas' closest patron. Normally they wouldn't be inclined to stop anything. But American pressure on the Sandinistas appears to be working: Daniel Ortega's anniversary address was positively conciliatory. It is not that the Sandinistas fear a *contra* victory. They don't. Nor are they afraid that a worsening economic situation will spark an internal revolt—at least not in the short term. Only the outright hostility of the Roman Catholic church could topple the regime from within. Nicaragua is over 90 percent Roman Catholic, and throughout the country, people say they will not "choose against God." The church's disaffection is well known: "The revolution has brought some good things," says Managua archbishop Obando y Bravo, "but it has filled the hearts of men with hate." Still, the church has yet to take on the Sandinistas directly, and a scientific measure of disenchantment is impossible. Three years ago, on the day after a published poll showed that 70 percent of the people wanted elections, the Sandinistas ruled that no further opinion surveys could be undertaken without government permission.

WHAT THE SANDINISTAS *do* FEAR RIGHT NOW IS AN American invasion. They have it all worked out in their heads: Honduras, acting as America's agent, precipitates a war with Nicaragua, and the marines come to the rescue. The Sandinistas have no illusion about war with the United States. They know they would lose—but only temporarily. America wouldn't occupy Nicaragua for long, and the Sandinistas would melt into the mountains—there to prepare again to remove whatever puppet government the United States installs in Managua. Eventually they would stage a comeback, but the whole affair would be uncomfortable—to say the least.

The Sandinistas really and truly believe that Ronald Reagan will invade their country. In a word, they believe the president is mad. "Miguel d'Escoto [the Nicaraguan foreign minister] has been reading Seymour Hersh's book on Kissinger," said Rita Delia Casco when I was in Managua. "He was very impressed, especially with the part about Nixon pretending to be mad, pretending to be capable of dropping a hydrogen bomb on Hanoi in order to get concessions. The Vietnamese didn't believe him, because they knew he really wasn't mad. But Reagan is, you know. He really is." "What he says about us is worthy of a madman," says Father Ernesto Cardenal, the Sandinista minister of culture. "He may end up in an insane asylum."

Barricada's Carlos Fernando Chamorro doesn't think Reagan is mad, but he has an equally skewed notion of politics north of the border. "It's very simple," he says. "Reagan needs a foreign-policy success to complement what he's done with the economy in order to ensure his re-election. He'll go to war against us, and the American people will rally round. Everything fits the picture: The Kissinger report has been postponed till February—which coincides with the end of the rainy season and the coming of perfect weather for the [American] carriers' planes to fly against us."

Chamorro possesses the ideologue's most perverse quality: a near-total capacity for delusion, a blindness that is serving Ronald Reagan well. The president certainly could use a foreign-policy success, but he would likely be driven from office if he went to war in Central America. What he *would* welcome, however, is a cave-in by the Sandinistas without a single American shot having been fired. He would like to win the war without fighting it. And that is exactly what might happen—all because the Sandinistas believe that an actor

who played opposite a chimpanzee in a Hollywood movie must certainly be capable of ordering the American fleet to do something more than simply steam in circles off the Nicaraguan coast. (If further proof of the Sandinistas' paranoia about Reagan is desired, read the interview they gave to *Playboy* this month.)

THE SANDINISTAS IN NICARAGUA AND THE GUERRILLAS in El Salvador have the same sponsors: Cuba and the Soviet Union. Havana and Moscow may not share the Sandinistas' belief in Ronald Reagan's insanity, but they seem equally eager to avoid an American invasion. Soviet president Yuri Andropov has already dropped a hint in *Der Spiegel* that he understands about spheres of influence—just as he hopes the United States understands about Afghanistan. The Russians are strapped economically, and Andropov needs to preserve his trading links with the United States—a business that has flourished in the face of Ronald Reagan's rhetoric because, as George Will has written, the administration "loves commerce more than it loathes communism." The Soviets already subsidize Cuba to the tune of \$3 billion to \$4 billion a year. One Western Hemisphere economy in the toilet is enough. So the Soviets appear to have drawn the line: They have said repeatedly that their support for the Sandinistas is "political" rather than economic or military.

Fidel Castro helped found the F.S.L.N. in 1961. Tomás Borge was his emissary to the Middle East during the 1970s. Cuba was instrumental in the Sandinistas' victory over Somoza. But Castro has been less bellicose than usual, and there are credible reports of his displeasure with the Sandinistas. The latest indication came in Castro's own anniversary speech, on July 26. Conspicuously absent was a pledge to send Cuban soldiers to respond if the United States intervenes directly in Nicaragua.

If there ever is warfare between Nicaragua and America,



Before joining up with the contras, Alfonso Robelo—then a Sandinista official—got some pointers from Fidel Castro.

Castro will have two choices. He can stay aloof—and lose face with revolutionaries around the world, who will wonder how he can send soldiers to Africa while abandoning his closest comrades. Or he can join in—and risk having the United States take out *both* Nicaragua and Cuba. Either way, he would lose. Hence his caution.

If Castro wants the Sandinistas to retreat, it is not difficult to construct his argument: "Let's back down for now, boys. Let's consolidate what we have. It's taken twenty years, but now there are two of us in America's backyard. History is on our side. We can wait. There is nothing in the dialectic that says we have to take over the world tomorrow. I myself acted too fast in the 1960s when I attempted to destabilize Venezuela. There's nothing wrong with tactical retreat. And don't

worry—America's hysteria will die down before long. We may even luck out completely and get a wimp like Carter in the White House, and then we'll be rolling again."

Castro godfathered the Salvadoran guerrillas as he did the Sandinistas. The unity that now exists among the five guerrilla groups was engineered by Castro in Havana. He would make the same argument to Joaquín Villalobos in El Salvador that he would make to Tomás Borge in Nicaragua. And no matter how many guns the guerrillas have, they still need outside support. If their sponsors tell them to wait, they'll wait.

WHAT ABOUT THE UNITED STATES? WHAT IS RONALD Reagan's real objective? Will the administration use its apparent leverage to conclude a negotiated settlement?

In the beginning, before the issue of Central America reached its current feverish pitch, the president's goal seemed simple: He would not permit El Salvador to fall to Communism. This straightforward policy was articulated to the Sandinistas by former assistant secretary of state Thomas Enders in August of 1981. The deal was simple, and today it has a name: It is called "symmetry." Its crux was (and is) a trade: The United States would stop the *contras* threatening Nicaragua if the Sandinistas (and, by implication, the Cubans) called off the Salvadoran guerrillas. For dessert, Enders promised a massive infusion of economic aid to Nicaragua, assistance that would have greatly helped solidify the regime. Stupidly, because they didn't perceive a *contra* threat and wouldn't believe Alfredo Cesar's dire economic predictions, the Sandinistas refused.

Today, as the president ratchets up the military show of force, something new has been added to the equation. Ronald Reagan now says that there can *never* be peace in Central America as long as the Sandinistas are in power in Managua. Even a promise to confine their activities to their own country is not enough. The Sandinistas have to go.

But it could all be a great bluff—and it probably is. If Reagan is really willing to settle for symmetry (with verification and all the trimmings), if he is willing to build on Daniel Ortega's partial capitulation, then he is pursuing that ambition properly: He is hiding his true position while playing to his strength—his warmonger, madman image.

The critics are wrong: Pressure *can* moderate the Sandinistas' behavior, even internal pressure. Last year, for example, when the church protested the Sandinistas' curtailment of Holy Week observances, the regime backed down.

If firmness can force conciliation, why not keep it up? Send two, four, ten fleets to the area; have the *entire* United States Army participate in war games in Honduras, not just 5,000 troops. Keep it up till the Sandinistas cry uncle.

MERE SYMMETRY HAS ITS PROBLEMS. IN EL SALVADOR, the danger is that the United States will go home. If Americans no longer perceive a guerrilla threat to the Salvadoran government, there will be strong congressional agitation to get out. And then there will be *no* leverage on the government to reform. By its involvement, the United States has accepted no small responsibility for El Salvador's future. To leave would be to abandon that nation to a depth of evil not known to this point even in El Salvador. And then, when the guerrillas return to fight next time, they will meet little resistance—and will deserve a free ride. (The same is true of the region as a whole. As usual, the United States is reacting late to an area's problems, and reacting at all only because it fears Communist expansion. If a cease-fire is negotiated, Congress will want to send scarce resources to other trouble spots. By walking away from Central America, the United States would only hasten the region's "loss" farther down the line.)

In Nicaragua, symmetry would save many lives—but the Sandinistas would be confirmed in power. Ronald Reagan would be abandoning his principles—but he would be follow-



Well equipped for "monsoon warfare," the *contras* spend most of their time setting up ambushes and fighting rust.

ing a long tradition. For no matter how much the United States may prefer democracy, American governments have always been (shortsightedly) content with political order, even when that order is the product of dictatorship.

The mere mention of symmetry leaves men like Alfonso Robelo and Adolfo Calero apoplectic. Reagan's speech to them would be like Castro's from the opposite end of the ideological spectrum: "Look, fellas, this symmetry thing can get me through the next election. After that, while I'm not now giving you *carte blanche*, I'm sure you'll be able to get back in gear. And that's because the Communists won't be able to keep themselves down. They'll start violating the symmetry agreement before long."

It is possible, however, that Ronald Reagan is serious about actually ousting the Sandinistas and that an American diplomat in Managua reflected the president's real feelings when he told *Newsweek's* Beth Nissen that the "only thing the Sandinistas [could do to please the White House] is shoot themselves." If this in fact is Ronald Reagan's true position, then he will play a different game—but one that still avoids the direct involvement of American forces. "The dirty little secret," says an American involved in planning the administration's Central American policy, "is that we wouldn't even go to war over Honduras. Over Costa Rica, which is a real democracy, yes. But not Honduras. And the beauty of it is we can say just that till we're blue in the face and the Sandinistas won't believe us."

All of which means that the Central American crisis will play out in one of two ways. Either symmetry will be constructed because everyone decides it is in his best (short-term) interest, or the situation will proceed as it has for the past few years: The *contras* will continue their harassment, with increased C.I.A. support, and the Salvadoran guerrillas will keep fighting, with intermittent success. In this scenario—the "Nothing Changes" scenario—every side can continue to dream of victory. The wars will slog on—tests of will, with each side remembering that the turning point in guerrilla combat often comes when least expected and without explanation. Since "Nothing Changes" is a scenario of hope (and one that accords with the White House's reading of domestic politics), it is closer to the way people feel and think in real life: Everyone believes he will succeed if he just keeps at it. I'd bet that nothing will change.