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El Salvador deepens frown lines



Jim
Klobuchar

Dialogues
In a Deli

Frown lines deepen over El Salvador

The Central Intelligence Agency snops offended Mike St. Dennis with their campus spying during the Vietnam War, but he trusts the CIA in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Sandy Ritter doesn't; he is fogged about what the CIA is up to in Latin America.

An advertising man named Fred Pielert squirms over what he believes is the Reagan administration's wrong-headed risk of turning the Central America turmoil into high noon between the superpowers, and a lawyer named Jim McCarthy is convinced this country is supporting "a gang of murderers" in El Salvador.

St. Dennis isn't convinced, because he still hasn't been able to distinguish the saints from the cutthroats.

And a mother with a 9-year-old son is worried about global war, possibly ignited in those tropical jungles that were once part of the comic political idiom in the United States.

They were banana republics, with three political parties, one in power, one in jail and the other in the cemetery. Ernie Kovacs made movies about them. And if the tourist had a long lunch, he usually missed the latest local regime.

People suffered desperately there, but usually what you heard about Latin America was juntas and coffee beans.

Nobody among the luncheon diners saw anything mirthful about El Salvador and Nicaragua Monday at Kramarczuk East European Deli.

But nobody claimed any sudden clarity of vision, either.

The Star's Monday afternoon nomad calls regularly at Kramarczuk's seeking the community's wisdom.

He got perplexity, annoyance, anxiety and doubt.

One thing he didn't get was boredom.

The tumult in Central America and Alex Haig are in our living rooms every evening, he noted, and asked: "Does it mean anything important in our lives?"

Beyond that, how are we looking at Central America—as a security problem for the United States or as a place of relentless poverty that we might be capable of relieving.

"Instead of looking at the problem of poverty there, what we're doing is playing world politics with El Salvador and Nicaragua and the others," architect Sandy Ritter said. "If we insist on that, I think it's just a matter of time until it comes back to bite us. We're trying to bolster somebody in El Salvador with enough muscle to run the politics, but our history has been that eventually the people we're backing get thrown out. We're now hearing talk about a clandestine American operation against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, but the government there is probably more legitimate than the one we're supporting in El Salvador. We don't seem to be able to distinguish the nationalist interests of those people. I don't trust the CIA in Latin America because I don't know what they're doing."

Whatever the CIA is concocting in Nicaragua, St. Dennis argued, is nothing more than a response to Communist manipulations from Cuba and the Soviet Union.

"Nobody is preventing those people from doing their blacklists or infiltrating and the rest," he said. "The CIA is set up to keep this country informed and to act in our interests. We've got an investment there and a security interest. We have a free country where we can debate these things, but we also have to be diligent about protecting what we have."

St. Dennis is a promoter of neighborhood commerce in Minneapolis. He has been involved with south Minneapolis business for years and now with Old St. Anthony. He wants to be patriotic on the Central America wrangles, but he

has trouble with the cast of characters.

"The problem is separating the good guys from the bad guys," he said. "We've got to worry about Castro's infiltration, but then you hear about the atrocities committed by the government we're supporting, so where do you go?"

Fred Pielert wants to go back to the square that reads, "Settle your own dilemmas first."

"We've got economic problems," he said, "and I'm afraid an easy solution might be to get involved in the war down there. I think what's happening there could be a danger to our peace and security only if we make a big open, global prestige issue out of it, which it doesn't have to be. The CIA down there doesn't bother me.... They perform a function that's necessary to every government. I'm simply saying that if instead of making a world showdown out of this we handle it quietly and subtly and constantly watch it, we'd be better off."

But how can you make a revolution subtle?

"I'm just saying that our priority right now is to get this country moving again. I think you should take care of your own problems before jumping into somebody else's."

But did the gentleman honestly believe this country was risking a major war with its political strategies in Latin America.

"From my own experience," he said, "I think the children in grammar school today are growing up with a fear of war that is much more pronounced than it's ever been."

Daisy Ritter has a 9-year-old son and would not argue with Pielert.

"The struggles of the Latin Americans are important to me because we share the planet with them," she said. "I think that is reason enough. Yes, I'm afraid of war. I was afraid for my husband at the time of Vietnam, and now I'm afraid for my son."

What disturbs Jim McCarthy about the American involvement in

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