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64-1875/1

24 April 1984

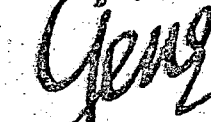
Dear Bill,

I enjoyed our talk this morning. Regarding the Texas based Gulf and Caribbean Foundation, I want you to have the first report they produced. Thousands of copies have already been distributed to newspapers, universities, and church groups, and just last week the Foundation got a request for a copy from Kenya. Now that's what I call coverage!

Peter Rodman is out of the office on leave until Monday. My staff is trying to rustle up a draft of the President's speech.

I'll be in Texas from Friday to next Monday speaking on Mexico and Central America. If Gates doesn't reach me before then, I'll call him when I come back.

Sincerely,



H. Eugene Douglas

Enclosures:

10 copies of "Central America: The Future of the Democratic Revolution"

The Honorable
William J. Casey,
Director, Central Intelligence Agency.



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Approved For Release 2008/08/27 : CIA-RDP90B01370R000200330013-0

Attachment to: ER 84-1875/1 (24Apr84)

Record

Central America: The Future of the Democratic Revolution

The Gulf and Caribbean Foundation

Approved For Release 2008/08/27 : CIA-RDP90B01370R000200330013-0

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**CENTRAL AMERICA:
THE FUTURE OF THE
DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION**

Michael A. Ledeen

Approved For Release 2008/08/27 : CIA-RDP90B01370R000200330013-0

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This study was commissioned by the Gulf & Caribbean Foundation, a private, non-profit foundation concerned about Central America and the Caribbean. The study is based upon considerable independent research by the main participants in a study group formed by the Foundation, upon a fact-finding trip to the region by Max Singer and Joachim Maitre in December, 1983, and upon discussions with Mr. Elie Wiesel later that month prior to his own trip to the area in early 1984.

The final draft was written by Michael Ledeen.

Members of the group

Elie Wiesel is a world-renowned author, teacher and humanitarian, having written numerous novels and essays about the Holocaust and the dilemmas of contemporary man. Because of his unique humanitarian concerns, Mr. Wiesel was invited to participate in the discussions of the group, and to make his own trip to Honduras and the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua to investigate the human costs of one element in the Central American crisis.

Max Singer, formerly president of the Hudson Institute, is the president of The Potomac Organization, Inc. in Washington, D.C. He has written extensively about Central America in publications such as the *Washington Post*, the *Miami Herald*, *Commentary* and *Reader's Digest*, and is the author of *Nicaragua: the Stolen Revolution*, a publication of the United States Information Agency.

Joachim Maitre is Professor of International Relations at Boston University, and was formerly Editor in Chief at Springer Publications in Germany, and Professor of Literature at McGill University in Montreal, Canada.

Michael A. Ledeen, formerly special adviser to Secretary of State Alexander Haig, is Senior Fellow in International Affairs at the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., and a consultant to the Department of State. The views in this article are not necessarily those of the United States Government.

INTRODUCTION: THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION AND ITS ENEMIES

Americans are torn between two passions in the conduct of foreign policy: they wish to see democracy advance, and they wish their government to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. The first is a reflection of our national ideals, the second represents a desire to see others emulate our democratic revolution on their own, without the kind of outside assistance that might throw into doubt the legitimacy and spontaneity of that revolution. Both ideals are admirable, but in practice they cannot coexist, for the simple reason that the enemies of the democratic revolution join together to prevent its spread and to threaten it where it already exists. If we wish to defend and advance democracy, we must be willing to give it our assistance

For the past few years, an encouraging attempt at moderate democratic revolution has been underway in Central America, and the enemies of democracy have predictably launched a counterrevolution against it. In this political and military drama, many of the actors play unfamiliar roles, and this has confused many people who believe in the values of the democratic revolution, but who find themselves baffled by events in the area. We are not used to seeing military officers leading democratic revolutions, yet in both Salvador and Honduras, military leaders have been instrumental in moving their countries from traditional, autocratic dictatorships onto the road toward democracy. We are inclined to take people at their word, especially when they are willing to risk their lives for a democratic ideal. Yet in Nicaragua, many self-proclaimed revolutionaries who spoke avidly of democracy when they fought against the tyranny of Somoza just a few years ago, are now leading their country toward the darkness of a dictatorship that threatens to be far more efficient than the one that preceded it.

In all three countries (as well as in the other countries of the region),

the United States has been called upon to exert its great wealth and power to influence the outcome of internal and external conflicts. The question has been debated at great length in Congress, in the universities and in the press; international conferences have been devoted to the matter, and American diplomats regularly deal with Central America from one end of the world to the other. Yet the American people are confused. According to the most sophisticated opinion polls, less than ten percent of the American public can correctly identify the position of the American Government in both Salvador and Nicaragua. Fewer still have any clear idea of what is at stake in this regional crisis. Are we, as our leaders assure us, really supporting the forces of democracy in Central America, or do the governments we support down there thwart the aspirations of the people, murder their political opponents, and use American assistance to advance their own personal interests?

Finally, there is the question of the significance of the Central American turmoil. Need we involve ourselves in the conflicts, or should we instead follow the second of our two conflicting passions, and simply abstain, restricting our activity to diplomacy and economic assistance where it seems warranted?

Our view is that it is morally imperative for the United States to support the forces of the democratic revolution in Central America. We believe that these forces—with all their admitted defects, which are sometimes grave ones—are best represented by those Salvadorans (primarily military officers) who staged and supported the coup of 1979 that produced a radical land reform program, and democratic elections in 1982; by the Honduran military and civilian leaders who have moved that country from a traditional military dictatorship to a duly elected civilian government; and by those Nicaraguans who fought against Somoza and who—along with groups singled out for repression by the new regime—are now resisting the efforts of the Sandinistas to install a new totalitarianism. We further believe that the major threat to the democratic revolution in Central America comes from anti-democratic extremists of the Right and Left who see their own power and objectives threatened by democracy, and who consequently wish to destroy the delicate democratic experiments in Salvador and Honduras, and to consolidate the Sandinista tyranny in Nicaragua. The extremists of the Right are largely a local phenomenon; those of the Left receive considerable assistance from other countries: first and foremost, the Soviet Union and Cuba, along with their allies in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. This international Communist network systematically assists, and sometimes actually directs the radical guerrilla movements in Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica and Guatemala.

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Finally, a few words need to be said about the all-important question of social justice, for democracy cannot flourish in a society where misery and unfairness predominate. All the countries in Central America, with the possible exception of Costa Rica, have long been characterized by poverty and oppression, and social equity cannot be rapidly achieved in these countries. Yet we feel quite strongly that the guerrilla movements in Central America have falsely claimed that their basic motive is the desire to eliminate injustice and misery. We believe their real motive is the desire to destroy the democratic revolution that is underway. If the democratic forces of the region are to succeed, they will have to overcome some imposing obstacles and defeat their counterrevolutionary opponents at the same time they give the people of the region hope that a more equitable society can be constructed through democratic processes. The United States must lend its strength and wealth to these tasks.

**ONE:
NICARAGUA
(OR, THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED)**

The best description of the unhappy fate of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua comes from one of its most distinguished former officials. Arturo J. Cruz was a member of the revolutionary junta from April, 1980 until the following March, when he left to become Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United States. He resigned his post in Washington in November, 1981, took up residency in the United States, and later wrote about his experiences in the Summer issue of *Foreign Affairs* magazine:

I joined the Revolutionary Government with appreciation and pride. I served it with a loyalty founded on the conviction that the Revolution would be good, *first and foremost*, for Nicaragua. My experience has disillusioned me: dogmatism and adventurism seem to have wiped out the democratic and plurastic ideals which, in 1979, united all Nicaraguan advocates of freedom. My lamentation and criticism is that these ideals have been shattered and the moral defenses of the Revolution have well-nigh vanished . . .

The tragedy that befell the Sandinista revolution is all the more disappointing because the revolution itself was thoroughly justified, and removed an odious and corrupt dictatorship from Nicaragua. The Somoza family had in fact dominated the country for 45 years, from 1934 to 1979, and dealt harshly with anyone who challenged (or was suspected of challenging) the family autocracy. The success of the Sandinista revolution was due, in the end, to popular rage against the Somoza tyranny, but the revolt took its name from a man—Augusto Cesar Sandino—who organized a radical movement in the late 1920s to oppose the establishment of American military bases in Nicaragua. Sandino was assassinated in 1934, probably on the orders of the first Somoza, Anastasio Somoza Gar-

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cia (himself assassinated by a lone gunman in 1956), and Sandino's followers continued to constitute a violent opposition movement. In 1962 the *Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional* (FSLN) was organized (significantly, as events would later demonstrate, in both Nicaragua and Cuba) and the revolutionary movement gathered steam following the December, 1972 earthquake when some 10,000 people died and the government proved unable to organize a decent relief operation.

The combination of arbitrary repression, a greedy and incompetent elite (half of the 32 million dollars of American aid sent after the earthquake was never accounted for, and presumably finished in the pockets of Somoza and his followers), and impotence in the face of challenge (whether from natural catastrophe or, later, from the armed Sandinista guerrillas) proved fatal to the last Somoza, and he was overthrown by the FSLN—now expanded to include many distinguished moderates as well as the hard-core Leninists who dominated the movement—in July, 1979. A year later he was assassinated in Paraguay in one of the more spectacular terrorist acts of recent years: his armored car was blown to pieces by bazooka shells.

Somoza's conquerors promised a democratic revolution, and many of their acts, both before and immediately after the overthrow of Somoza suggested that they were honest in their promises. The 5-member Junta of National Reconstruction included two persons of undoubted democratic credentials: the businessman and political leader Alfonso Robelo, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, the widow of the distinguished and courageous owner of *La Prensa*, the country's one truly independent newspaper; in the months before the seizure of power the Sandinistas had opened their ranks to people of various political persuasions, and had promised to respect political pluralism once in power; free elections were promised within "a reasonable period of time"; a major program of public education was launched, with notable results (although, with the passage of time, much of the "education" turned out to be Marxist indoctrination); and, finally, with considerable foreign help the medical care of the population was dramatically improved.

But the early promise was not fulfilled, and it is now apparent that the Sandinistas never intended to permit their triumph to be diluted by democracy; they wanted to create a Communist tyranny, allied with Cuba and the Soviet Union, and opposed to the United States. Many Nicaraguan leaders and many more American writers and politicians, have argued that the United States might have been able to have good relations with the Sandinista Regime, and thereby prevent the drive toward Com-

munist totalitarianism. Many of the same people argue that the failure of the United States to provide economic assistance to Nicaragua created, or helped to create an economic crisis in the country, thereby intensifying the "siege mentality" of the leaders and accelerating the imposition of emergency measures, press censorship and political repression.

Yet the Sandinistas' own literature argues against this interpretation, and shows that their own counterrevolutionary intentions were clear from the moment of triumph. On 5 October, 1979, the Sandinistas published a remarkable document that contained the central ideas of the new regime. These had been presented to the faithful—the FSLN Cadre—during a three-day meeting the previous month, and three of the theses presented during that meeting expose the basic, counterrevolutionary intent of the Sandinista leadership:

1. The Provisional Government, with its two distinguished moderates, was described as "an alliance of convenience organized by the Sandinistas to thwart Yankee intervention." In case this was not absolutely clear, later on the Sandinistas explained that several steps had to be taken during the "interim period" in order to protect the revolution from its enemies. Among these steps was the necessity of maintaining small political parties "because of international opinion." Their first task upon seizing power, they said, "is to educate the people to recognize that the FSLN is the legitimate leader of the revolutionary process."

In other words, the talk about pluralism was a ploy designed to trick other countries, and was never a real objective of the Sandinistas.

2. They called for the creation of "an army politicized without precedent", and they kept their promise. By 1983, Nicaragua had by far the largest armed force in Central America (50,000 men, with projects for a potential fighting force of a quarter of a million), and called for every able-bodied man to enlist (simultaneously withholding rationing cards from those who declined).

3. They called for support for "the World Revolution".

Two years after the conquest of power, President Daniel Ortega gave a speech to a group of military specialists in Nicaragua, in which he reemphasized both the counterrevolutionary nature of the regime, and the unalterable anti-American character of their world-view. First, the counter-revolution: Ortega announced that the future elections in Nicaragua "will

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in no way—like a lottery—decide who is going to hold power. For this power belongs to the people, to the FSLN, to our Directorate.” Moreover, Ortega said, “Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution . . . We cannot be Marxist-Leninist without Sandinism, and without Marxism-Leninism Sandinism cannot be revolutionary . . .”

Concerning Nicaragua’s choice of foreign policy, Ortega declared:

. . . on July 19, 1979, world society was polarized into two major camps . . . the camp of imperialism, the camp of capitalism, headed up by the United States and the rest of the capitalist countries in Europe and throughout the world . . . (and) the socialist camp made up of various countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America and with the Soviet Union in the vanguard.

Of the early period, during which time he was in the Junta, Arturo Cruz has written, “our foreign policy began to show how senseless our goals were. Instead of dedicating all our energy to building the ideal society for which our people had hoped, we were chasing chimeras abroad . . . Declaring ourselves nonaligned, we were, in fact, leaning to the Socialist bloc.” Indeed, the Sandinistas supported the Soviet Union on most significant international questions, and remained silent—imposing it via press censorship when necessary—about the Solidarity trade union movement in Poland.

In other words, the Sandinista leaders were profoundly counterrevolutionary, for they acted to prevent the people from expressing their true sentiments, imposed a preordained model on Nicaraguan society, and subordinated Nicaraguan interests to those of the international Communist movement. The Sandinistas’ fear of democratic revolution—and their eagerness to proclaim and demonstrate their true Leninist nature—were so strong that when the Pope visited Nicaragua in 1983, the sound system at his first big rally in Managua was rigged so that his words were “jammed”. As we have learned from several Sandinista defectors, the regime in Managua has devoted considerable manpower and money to creating an alternative religion in Nicaragua, mixing the traditional Catholic liturgy with Marxist slogans. And Ronald Radosh, a well-known spokesman for the American Left, has written that “to back the Church in the context of the Nicaraguan revolution is to oppose the F.S.L.N.” In the autumn of 1983, there was an open break with the Catholic Church, with some of the leading religious figures in the country leaving for other, more hospitable lands.

Such a regime has quite predictably exceeded even Somoza's horrendous record on human rights. Jose Esteban Gonzalez, a distinguished opponent of Somoza and the founder of Nicaragua's Permanent Commission for Human Rights, was unceremoniously thrown in jail by the Sandinistas, and was released only after well-publicized protests from the International Commission of Jurists. Gonzalez has noted that there are now more political prisoners in Nicaragua than "the highest figure ever registered under Somoza", and that systematic murder has also taken place, killings that "cannot be dismissed as rash acts of post-revolutionary anger" because they have continued for several years. And perhaps the most savage acts of the Sandinistas have taken place against the Miskito Indian population of the Atlantic Coast region, where 10,000 or more persons have been uprooted from their native villages, which were then burned to the ground. Many have been killed, others—including some of the leaders—have spoken of being tortured.

The Economic Disaster

The Sandinistas led a revolution against a corrupt and unfair regime, and promised to create a more equitable society. But this has not taken place, even though improvements have taken place in education and health care. Indeed, Gross Domestic Product is still below pre-revolution levels (the economy was wrecked by the final year of fighting, but did grow during the first two years of the new regime). More importantly, many business leaders—including men like Robelo, who were favorable to the Sandinistas and participated in the revolution for a while—have gone into exile, convinced that the new regime is unalterably opposed to an independent private sector and to a pluralistic society. Agriculture—the backbone of the economy—has also suffered, with the best cotton growers having left the country, and production is well below traditional levels.

Once again, Arturo Cruz provides reliable, first-hand testimony of his period as President of the Central Bank (1979-80):

. . .the new leaders seemed to overlook the simple fact that social programs must be financed out of public revenue. Frankly, we virtually emptied the well of fiscal revenue with the establishment of the so-called People's Property Area . . . a holding composed of properties formerly owned by Somoza and his closest followers . . . The government . . . is obsessed with state ownership of the means of production. The consequences of such policies are increases in

the money in circulation, arrears in public loan portfolios, and fiscal and balance-of-payment deficits. Nicaragua is condemned to be an international beggar.

Not only the private sector has been driven into opposition to the Sandinista counterrevolution: the independent trade union movement, having been maltreated by the regime, continues its fight. "The regime," according to Radosh, "sees independent unions as potentially dangerous, and strikes as a part of a C.I.A. attempt to destabilize Nicaragua." Thus the President of the Confederation of Nicaraguan Workers was beaten up at the airport upon returning from a foreign trip, and workers participating in a union demonstration were attacked by Sandinista thugs wielding lead pipes.

All those who speak out, or act against the policies of the regime are likely to find themselves singled out by the Sandinista Defense Committees, modelled on the infamous institutions created by Castro in Cuba to maintain rigid control over neighborhoods. When Robelo began to speak out against the betrayal of the revolution, the windows of his home were smashed by the local Defense Committee, which also painted the house with threatening graffiti. Things reached such a stage that Eden Pastora, the *Commandante Cero* who was the most celebrated military leader of the revolution, publicly stated in April, 1982:

...in the light of day or in the dead of night, the seizures, expropriations and confiscations oppress somicistas and anti-somocistas, counterrevolutionaries and revolutionaries, the guilty and the innocent. In the jails they beat the counterrevolutionaries together with the Marxist revolutionaries, these latter punished for the grave crime of interpreting Marx from a different point of view than the comrades in power.

Pastora, Robelo and other leaders of the revolution are now conducting an armed struggle against the Sandinista counterrevolution. Like the Sandinistas in the late seventies, the opponents of the regime are based in large part outside Nicaragua: Pastora and Robelo operate out of Costa Rica, while the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Front), which receives the bulk of American "covert" assistance, is based in Honduras. This fact, along with the American support for those fighting against the Sandinistas, points to one of the most important aspects of the current Central American crisis: it is truly a regional battle, and has been for many years.

**TWO:
EL SALVADOR
(OR, THE REVOLUTION UNDER SIEGE)**

The Sandinistas have not been content to subvert the Nicaraguan revolution; they have sent many of their leaders, and hundreds of young people to be trained in the Soviet bloc, from Cuba to Bulgaria, and they have joined the international counterrevolutionary movement to create regimes similar to their own throughout Central America (and, according to their own testimony, in Mexico as well). In so doing, they have yielded a good deal of control over their own destinies, for Nicaragua is flooded with expert "advisers" from the Communist countries, whose advice is more like commands than suggestions. The international connections of the Sandinistas thus serve not only their own desires, but those of the Kremlin as well.

The best documented connection is that with the guerrilla movement in El Salvador, the FMLN/DRU, and its political arm, the FDR. Nicaragua has served as haven, financier, supplier and control center for the Salvadoran guerrilla movement which, like the Sandinistas, took its name from an early twentieth-century figure, in this case Farabundo Marti. But unlike Sandino, who was an independent and democratic man, Marti was a Communist, and for a while served as the liaison for the Comintern with the early Sandinistas. The FMLN/DRU has generally stayed in line with the doctrines of its founding father, and the unified Salvadoran guerrilla movement was created in 1980—in Havana, at Fidel Castro's insistence. The Cubans agreed to support the Salvadorans provided that they put aside the political and operational differences that had heretofore divided the groups on the extreme Left, and formed a unified command. The Salvadorans did so, thereby constituting a formidable fighting force with considerable international support.

The FMLN/DRU came into existence at precisely the moment that most of its alleged objectives were being enacted by the new, revolution-

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ary government of Salvador. For in October, 1979, a group of army colonels led a coup that deposed the old ruling class of the country (some 30,000 of whom would leave the country in the next few years), instituted one of the most radical land-reform programs in the history of Latin America, nationalized the banks and the major exports, and promised democratic elections within three years. The army was purged, a civilian branch of the government (including Communists) was created, and steps were taken to diminish the activities of the "death squads" of the extreme Right that had terrorized the country for some time. Had the guerrillas been serious about desiring a democratic revolution for Salvador, they would have participated in the new political order that was ushered in by the coup. Instead they declared war on the new government.

In the heady atmosphere that followed the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, the Salvadoran Leftists expected that they would conquer their own country in short order, and by January, 1981, they were ready to launch their "final offensive" against the revolutionary government in San Salvador. It was a great failure, the first of several fiascos that would demonstrate a profound difference between the situations in Nicaragua and Salvador: the great majority of the people in Nicaragua supported the revolution against Somoza; but the great majority of the Salvadorans reject the insurrectionary appeal of the extreme Left. It is probably fair to say that, were it not for the great foreign support given to the guerrillas, the violent Left in Salvador would be defeated in a relatively short period of time. Alas, there is substantial support, some of it from very far away. Weapons and ammunition have arrived from Vietnam on Soviet ships, via Libya, Cuba and Nicaragua. The PLO, Ethiopia, North Korea and Mexico have also provided help in one way or another, and the command headquarters for the guerrillas is located just outside Managua, Nicaragua, where the course of the military campaign is analyzed by the Salvadorans along with Cuban and Nicaraguan experts in such matters.

This great international organization was brought to bear on a revolutionary government that offered real promise for the people of Salvador, but its programs could not be reasonably carried out in an atmosphere of constant fighting, where the guerrillas increasingly aimed their attacks at targets that would make normal life impossible in the country. Electrical stations and power lines, bridges and roads were primary targets, with periodic assaults on army strongholds and terrorist attacks on the cities. The army responded in kind, with some elements conducting mass killings of civilians suspected of complicity with the guerrillas.

Under similar circumstances in Nicaragua, the Sandinistas declared a

state of national emergency, suspended many civil rights, called for mass inductions into the armed forces, and generally increased repression. In Salvador, the elections went ahead as promised in March, 1982, even though the guerrillas threatened to kill people who went to the polls. More than 80% of the people voted, and although the Christian Democratic Party of Napoleon Duarte—the man named by the military to head the civilian branch of the revolutionary government—got more votes than any other party, five parties to the right of Duarte collectively obtained 60% of the vote, and were therefore able to exclude Duarte from power, and to name their most charismatic spokesman, a militant Rightist named Roberto D'Aubuisson, President of the Constituent Assembly. The big losers were the forces of the extreme Left, who refused to participate in the elections, and who had banked on a large proportion of abstentions. Following the elections, a new Constitution was drafted, with Presidential elections scheduled for the spring of 1984.

In the mean time, the guerrilla war has ebbed and flowed, depending upon the performance of the army (an increasing proportion of which was trained in the United States), the flow of weapons to the guerrillas from outside sources (a factor which in turn was affected by the success of the anti-Sandinista forces fighting the Nicaraguans from north and south), and the weather.

The upshot of all this was that the democratic revolution had come under attack from both political extremes. The Leftist guerrillas demanded a share of power, even though they could demonstrate little in the way of popular support. The Rightists, after their initial defeat by the revolution in 1979, insisted that the only way to end the guerrilla war was by unrestrained violence, and after a significant decline in the activity of the infamous "death squads" following the revolution, these odious institutions acquired new vigor in 1983, with a new, ominous twist: whereas the traditional "death squads" had engaged in indiscriminate killing of persons suspected (often with little evidence) of helping the Left, the new ones assassinated moderate political, religious and trade union leaders. While it was obvious that some of the killers came from the army, by late 1983 there were signs that the officials who supported the democratic revolution were finally moving to put an end to at least the latest version of the Rightist assassins.

As Max Singer wrote shortly before the 1982 elections,

...for the last two years El Salvador has been torn apart by two counterrevolutions, or phony revolutions, trying to gain power and

reverse the actions of the revolutionary group that has ruled since October 1979: one counterrevolution from the extreme Right, made up of the former ruling class, and one from the extreme Left, controlled and led by violent fanatics with the support of most of the enemies of the U.S. from all over the world.

The guerrillas could claim a major success in having thwarted the immediate goals of the revolution, for although there is little doubt that the great majority of Salvadorans supported the goals of the 1979 coup, at a certain point order and security become more important than political ideals, and Salvador showed alarming tendencies toward polarization by the end of 1983. The economy predictably suffered from the effects of the war, with a considerable expansion of government debt (in 1982 the government deficit was 35% of its total expenditure, and 7.3% of GDP, and was growing), and a parallel decrease in GDP (remarkably, however, the rate of decrease was slowing: it fell by about 9% in 1980 and 1981, but by 5.4% in 1982).

Even more discouraging was the reaction of "enlightened" public opinion in much of the West, for there were tendencies in the United States and Western Europe to treat the guerrillas as the true revolutionaries, and the army as a reactionary force. Prior to the 1982 elections, President Duarte was widely considered to be a reactionary, even though he had been imprisoned and tortured for the "crime" of having won the elections of 1972, and even though Duarte and the military leaders of the coup followed through on their promises for land reform, democratic elections, and a reduction in the activity of the traditional death squads.

There was a great unwillingness to recognize what had happened in Salvador, on both sides of the basic conflict between the government and the guerrillas: the notion that military officers might lead a successful democratic revolution is difficult for many people to accept, especially since the military caste in Latin America has so often played an authoritarian role. And it is also difficult for many Western journalists and politicians to recognize that the self-proclaimed "revolutionaries" in Salvador—the FMLN/DRU—are vicious counterrevolutionary killers in disguise. The same thing happened in Nicaragua, where even those journalists who knew that the hard-core Sandinistas were deeply committed Marxist-Leninists refrained from criticizing them early on (at a time when international pressure might have been decisive in preserving free institutions in Nicaragua). Georgie Anne Geyer, one of the best American journalists on the Latin American beat, wryly recalled:

When I went back (to Nicaragua) after the Sandinista takeover, I was willing to give the new forces the benefit of the doubt, despite the prevalence of hard-core Marxists in the top command. Part of the reason for this was that I had been so harsh on Marxist Cuba over the years that I wanted to be especially fair, trying to believe there could indeed be a "new" kind of revolution here. In retrospect, I was too fair . . .

It was normal to bend over backwards to be kind to the Sandinistas, because the sentiments of Americans quite naturally support ostensibly revolutionary enterprises against dictators like Somoza, and one can understand—barely—the difficulty encountered by Americans trying to grasp the uniqueness of the democratic revolution led by the colonels in El Salvador. But one is hard pressed to explain the unwillingness of many observers to accept the fact that the guerrilla movement in Salvador is part and parcel of the same general phenomenon that has produced the awful results in Sandinista Nicaragua, and that if the FMLN/DRU wins in Salvador, it will become a second Nicaragua. Yet not only is this rarely if ever said (even now, when the Nicaraguan control over the Salvadoran guerrilla movement is largely recognized), but there is an ongoing tendency to overrate the popular support for the guerrillas. This is why ABC television (to take one example among many) was able to "report" at midday of the March, 1982 elections in Salvador, that there would be a lighter-than-expected turnout at the polls. Not only was this empirically wrong, but virtually every public opinion poll for weeks in advance had predicted a very high participation by the voters. Only the guerrillas claimed—and spread terror in order to guarantee—a large number of abstentions.

Mistakes of this sort, once they become firmly established, have policy consequences, and it may well be that the failure to perceive in a timely way what was going in Central America deprived the United States—and the other democratic countries of the world—of an opportunity to act effectively in support of the democratic revolution in Central America. In Nicaragua, many Western countries continued to contribute foreign aid long after it was clear that the Sandinistas were working against Western interests, and that an attempt was being made to establish a new totalitarianism. With regard to the revolution in Salvador, the governments of France and Mexico called upon the United States and the government of Salvador to grant the guerrillas a share of political power, and similar positions were taken by many other European governments, and repeatedly by most of the member parties of the Socialist International. It

was not until the fall of 1983 that Felipe Gonzales of Spain and Willi Brandt of Germany, speaking for the European Bureau of the Socialist International, condemned the course chosen by the Sandinistas, but even at that late date the two leading European Socialists could only warn that assistance *might* be terminated if the Sandinistas did not change their pattern of behavior. To make matters worse, they and most other European leaders continued to insist that the FMLN/DRU be brought into the government of Salvador, thereby acting as if Nicaragua did not exist at all. As Jean-Francois Revel has written in his latest book, *How the Democracies End*:

...commentators, observers and politicians have a hard time understanding complex situations . . . in which it is true on the one hand that in a given country there is a social crisis due to injustice, and false that Communism is qualified to resolve that crisis, but true yet again that Communists are quite capable of exploiting the crisis to achieve their political and strategic goals.

Who Speaks the Truth in Central America?

One of the problems facing us—and the people of the region who yearn for the success of the democratic revolution—is that it is normal for the leaders of Latin America (like those in most of the world) to say one thing in public and something quite different in private, when they express their real sentiments. This was dramatically evident, for example, during the Falklands crisis of 1982, when most of those Latin American leaders who were able to speak privately with the American Secretary of State told him that it was urgent for the United States to deal a devastating blow to Argentina, whatever they might say in public. At the same time, these very same leaders were denouncing the United States for supporting Great Britain in the war.

Much the same applies to Central America, where the leaders of Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama and Guatemala have all told officials of the United States that the greatest threat to the future of the region is the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. But they are reluctant to say such a thing in public, both because they fear reprisals and because some of them wish to maintain their own “progressive” credentials intact. In any event, they believe that the destiny of Central America will be determined by the behavior of the United States, and therefore feel free to take public positions on the basis of their own domestic political requirements.

To be sure, these are dangerous games to play, as the recent past dem-

onstrates all too clearly, for the public positions have an effect on American foreign policy. It has been reported, for example, that President Carter was told by Mexican President Lopez Portillo that although Somoza was a hateful man, if the Sandinistas triumphed in Nicaragua, the Mexicans would be forced to shift their foreign policy in a dramatically radical direction. Thus, the Mexicans preferred that Somoza be saved. The story may not be entirely accurate, but as the Italians say, even if it is not true it makes a true point: public statements by political figures do not always represent their true feelings, and dramatic events have far-reaching effects upon neighboring countries. At the moment, the greatest threat to the democratic revolution in Central America is the government of Nicaragua, its military might, its international network (above all Cuba and the Soviet Union), and its efforts to spread violent counterrevolution throughout the region. If the other countries of Central America are reluctant to say this publicly, we must do so. More importantly, if they are unwilling or unable to defend democracy by themselves, we must seek ways to help them to do it. And we must do so on the same basis that the counterrevolutionaries have launched their assault. The counterrevolution is regional. The democratic revolution must also have a regional structure.

**THREE:
HONDURAS AND GUATEMALA
(OR, THE EMBRYONIC REVOLUTION)**

Honduras is the second largest and one of the poorest of the Central American republics, and is the most recent member in the club of democratic governments in the region. For much of its history, Honduran elections were more honored in the breach than in the observance of their results, and as recently as 1971 General Oswaldo Lopez staged a successful coup when he failed to gain reelection to a second 6-year term. Acting with American encouragement, the Honduran military agreed to democratic elections in 1981, when Roberto Suazo Cordova became the first elected civilian in 18 years. He faced one of the worst economic crises in the country's history. In 1981, total production stagnated and 1982 production dropped by an estimated 1%. Lack of international confidence in the Honduran economy led to a shortage of foreign investment, and the high interest rates in the industrialized countries led to a flight of capital from Honduras. In 1982 there was a significant drop in exports of Honduras' basic commodities: coffee, sugar, meat, lead, silver and even tobacco, and the loss of revenue was not offset by increases in other exports. Suazo has adopted the by-now standard remedies to these problems: reduction of the federal deficit, greater liquidity for the private sector, and an attempt to maintain a satisfactory balance of payments in order to stabilize the exchange rate. Thus, while short-term prospects are not rosy, in the longer term Hondurans have reason to be cautiously optimistic.

The more dangerous problems for the country stem from the regional crisis, primarily those elements caused by the counterrevolution. The new tyranny in Nicaragua has produced a wave of refugees, now numbering an estimated 35,000 in Honduras alone. These include the so-called *contras* along Nicaragua's northern border, as well as the approximately 10,000 Miskito Indians who have taken sanctuary in Honduras. This has

placed an additional burden on an already strained country, and creates internal tensions that inevitably threaten the fragile democratic experiment upon which the nation has so recently embarked. As in Salvador, the Honduran military has lent its power and prestige to a transition to democracy; but as in Salvador, considerations of national survival will ultimately prevail over the desire for democratization.

Thus far, the Hondurans have managed to deal effectively with the counterrevolutionary guerrilla movement in their own country, thanks to good police work, and to a far lower level of activity by the guerrillas than in Salvador. It is thanks to the Hondurans, in fact, that we have learned one of the most interesting and little-known facts about the counterrevolutionaries: they are very often recruited under false pretenses.

It is widely believed that the guerrilla movements consist in part of idealist revolutionaries, and in part of professional guerrillas. But to these categories a third must now be added: those tricked into joining. Dozens of defectors have reported that they accepted invitations to travel to Nicaragua and Cuba in order, or so they believed, to be trained in agriculture or other technical skills. It was only after they arrived at their final destination that they were told the real purpose of their recruitment, at which time it was impossible to leave. They then went through extended training (often a year and a half or more) in Marxist ideology and guerrilla techniques, and were sent into battle in Salvador or Honduras, often under atrocious conditions (many defected because they were starving, and suffering from the effects of exposure, having inadequate clothing).

The activities of the Honduran authorities have uncovered an elaborate clandestine organization in the country, complete with safe houses, secret methods of transporting and storing weapons, gathering intelligence and establishing secret guerrilla cells. Thus the Hondurans were able to recognize early on that they would not be spared by the forces of counterrevolution in Central America, and they have acted to defend themselves. Not only has the Honduran Government permitted the anti-Sandinistas to train in Honduras, and use the country as its base of operations, but the Honduran Army has made it evident that it will not hesitate to fight the Nicaraguans if it comes to that. Yet, if Nicaragua achieves its announced military objectives Honduras will be no match in a war with the Sandinistas. It is for that reason that the United States has been willing to grant considerable military assistance to Honduras, as well as to aid the anti-Sandinistas.

The democratic revolution is still in an embryonic stage in Honduras,

but there is reason for hope. Despite difficult economic problems, a severe military threat from Nicaragua, and a guerrilla force operating inside the country, there are as yet no signs that the military is reconsidering its decision to take a chance on democracy. The Hondurans have faced their security problems realistically, and with surprising moderation: no state of emergency is in effect, the population is generally supportive of governmental policies, and there is reason to hope for continued democratic evolution. All of this, of course, is dependent upon containment or defeat of the counterrevolution, a theme to which we shall return in short order.

Guatemala: A Glimpse of Hope

Of all the countries in Central America, Guatemala is by far the most violent. According to Amnesty International, between 50,000 and 60,000 people were killed in the 1970s, many of them innocent Indians (who account for some 60% of the population) who have been regularly forced into near-slave labor conditions, and then murdered when they served their usefulness. Guatemalan governments have been repeatedly accused of political assassinations and of systematic torture, and the regime of General Lucas Garcia (1978-1982) is considered to have been the most corrupt and repressive in Latin American history, which is quite a record. In the last three years of his regime, the guerrilla movement multiplied three times over. Following the rigged elections of 1982, General Ephraim Rios Montt, a born-again Christian, seized power and attempted to relieve at least some of the evils of the recent past. Notorious corrupt generals were removed from their posts, a public campaign against unethical practices was launched, and some of the more infamous paramilitary groups were eliminated.

This was no democratic revolution; Rios Montt had no use for elections, and he claimed absolute authority for himself. This absolutism was useful, up to a point, for Rios Montt was able to eliminate some of the worst of the criminal activities in the country, especially the systematic exploitation and murder of the Indians. But in the end his religious fanaticism was unacceptable to the military, and he was removed in a bloodless coup by another general, Humberto Mejia Victores, in the summer of 1983. At first it appeared that Mejia would provide a period of calm moderation, but late in the year it appeared that the spiral of internal violence was beginning once again. Nonetheless, elections for a constituent assembly are scheduled for this July, with presidential elections planned the following year. There appears to be a rough consensus that this sort of

evolution, modelled on the Salvadoran and Honduran experiences, is necessary and desirable.

Guatemala may be in the stage immediately preceding the democratic revolution, but much will depend upon the success of the revolution in her two southern neighbors: Honduras and Salvador. And much will also depend upon the behavior of Mexico, to the north. For Mexico, despite its lip-service to democracy, has of late acted as handmaiden to the counter-revolution. As Lopez Portillo warned Jimmy Carter, with the triumph of the Sandinistas, Mexico shifted her international behavior, and now seems firmly allied with Cuba and Nicaragua in most regional affairs. Worse still, the Mexicans have permitted the Guatemalan guerrilla movement to use southern Mexico as a haven and training area, even though the guerrillas themselves have told visiting European and American journalists that if they take power in Guatemala, a similar movement will be launched against Mexico herself.

Mexican support for the counterrevolution has had innumerable pernicious effects, not only in supplying an operational base for the Guatemalan guerrilla movement and for the Salvadoran FMLN, but also in the diplomatic field. To quote Max Singer:

Mexican support for the FMLN was critical in enabling France, the Socialist International and many leading political figures in the United States to accept the perspective on El Salvador put forth . . . for the guerrillas. In the American and European discussion, Mexico was cited as an objective and informed source; at one point 100 Congressmen urged the State Department to pay greater heed to the Mexican initiative . . . Finally, in the summer of 1980 Lopez Portillo reportedly promised Castro that when the planned final offensive in El Salvador was carried out the following January, the Mexican army would conduct maneuvers near the Guatemalan border to discourage the Guatemalan army from interfering. (The maneuvers were carried out as promised, but by then the situation had changed.)

The future of Guatemala thus depends not only upon the courage and ability of her own leaders; much depends upon the overall regional situation. There are recent reports that the Guatemalans are "taking out insurance" and are beginning to talk with Mexico and Nicaragua about some sort of arrangement between the three. The first results of such contacts can perhaps be seen in the recent decision by the Guatemalan Navy to

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stop patrolling Salvador's northern waters, thus giving the FMLN greater operating space, and greater access to arms shipments by sea. A prudent government must guard against "worst-case scenarios," after all, and the Guatemalans seem to be taking steps to ensure decent relations with the counterrevolutionaries should they prevail. Needless to say, such developments are likely to be fatal to any hopes for a democratic revolution in Guatemala.

**FOUR:
COSTA RICA
(OR, THE REVOLUTION HELD HOSTAGE)**

Costa Rica is the oldest democracy in Latin America, having held free elections uninterrupted since 1889. It is also unique in Latin America for another reason: there is no army there, order being maintained by a 5,000-man police force that changes personnel every five years. Despite its name (which means "rich coast"), Costa Rica is not rich in natural resources, and has had to depend upon the enterprise and skill of its population to develop wealth. By and large it has been a success; Costa Rica has perhaps the most successful agricultural program in Central America, as well as a modest industrial base and considerable commercial activity.

Nonetheless, Costa Rica now faces a dramatic crisis, caused by the irresponsibility and profligacy of the government that preceded the current regime of Alberto Monge (a social democrat), by the security problems resulting from the country's location along Nicaragua's southern border, and by the world economic crisis resulting from the latest oil shocks and debt problems. In 1981, Costa Rica's GDP dropped by 3%, the first such decline in three decades. Unemployment stands at 15%, and inflation at 65%, and Monge has been forced to renegotiate the country's foreign debt with the International Monetary Fund, and to increase basic prices for water, electricity, gasoline and telephone service.

Few doubt the ability of the country to rebound from its current difficulties, but it now faces problems that are new, and that may not be so easily resolved. In the first place, Costa Rica has been intimately involved in the cycle of revolution and counterrevolution in Nicaragua, having been a major staging base for the Sandinistas during the fight against Somoza. Especially in the last two years, San Jose was a major staging base for Sandinista operations, which drew to Costa Rica the radical elite of all of Latin America. Cubans, Tumpamaros, Montoneros and other radical guerrillas came to Costa Rica, established radio stations, training

bases, shipping companies and all the other activities required to support the FSLN. The attitude of successive Costa Rican governments has wavered between a desire to maintain neutrality in the region's violent conflicts, and a natural antipathy to dictatorships. The Monge government, for example, has often spoken critically of the Sandinista regime, but has recently declared an absolute neutrality which, if enforced, would force the anti-Sandinista forces led by Eden Pastora and Alfonso Robelo to leave the country. This would then put Costa Rica in the paradoxical position of having aided the counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua, but denying any support to the Sandinistas' enemies.

The second problem facing Costa Rica is corruption. If Honduras suffers from poverty, Costa Rica's current problem is one of wealth squandered. Unlike the other countries in the region, Costa Rica's corruption is not limited to a traditional (generally military) elite, but is spread over a far wider spectrum of the population. But its effects are just as pernicious, threatening to sap the traditional energy and industry of the country. It remains to be seen whether Monge has the strength of character to withstand the pressures of a powerful counterrevolutionary neighbor to the north and an increasingly cynical population that seeks private gain at the expense of national integrity. Like most matters of this sort, the outcome will depend upon both the leadership qualities of the government and the eventual victors in the regional conflicts.

Under normal circumstances, Costa Rica would serve as a model for the moderate revolutions elsewhere in Central America. Surprisingly, no American Government in recent years has attempted to elevate Costa Rica to this role. Yet under present circumstances, Costa Rica cannot play such a part, for she can be so easily overwhelmed by the military might of Nicaragua. Recognition of this fact undoubtedly plays a major role in Monge's public embrace of neutrality (one may presume that in private he repeats his earlier outspoken criticism of the Managua regime), yet if the counterrevolution prevails in Salvador and then Honduras, Costa Rican neutrality may take on a Mexican-style coloration.

FIVE: THE FUTURE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Throughout the fall and early winter of 1983-84, a group of distinguished Guatemalans worked on a draft of a new, democratic constitution for their country. They met daily at the Francisco Maroquin University, a private institution renowned throughout the region for its independence and high standards, and for its commitment to freedom. The chairman of the private group was the President of the University, Professor Manuel Ayau, the dean of Central American economists. In this most violent and traditionally repressive country of the area, the democratic revolution was being designed. To be sure, the men who labored over the revolutionary document had no guarantee that the military rulers of the country would accept their recommendations; but then, the men who drafted our own Declaration of Independence and our Constitution also worked against the odds. The point is that the values of the democratic revolution are flourishing in Central America. Brave men and women are willing to risk their lives for it, against the implacable hostility of both political extremes. We must help them.

In order to help them effectively, we must clear our minds of a series of myths and stereotypes that have clouded our vision and confounded our judgment. The central myths are these:

The guerrilla movements are revolutionary, and spring from the justifiable rage of oppressed and miserable people.

In fact, the guerrilla movements are counterrevolutionary, and if they triumph, the countries of Central America will experience a tyranny more efficient and more systematic than anything they have undergone to date. We hoped that the Sandinistas would prove an exception to this rule; they did not. They instead followed the Cuban model. The guerrillas in Sal-

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vador, Honduras and Guatemala are cut from the same cloth and will carry out the same programs as the dictators in Cuba and Nicaragua.

The military in Central America is inevitably authoritarian, cannot accept the rules of the democratic game, and is an obstacle to the democratic revolution.

In fact the military has proven to be a vital ingredient in the democratic revolution in both Salvador and Honduras. Military leaders have overthrown the old tyrants, endorsed radical programs of social and political revolution, and shown a willingness to step aside and endorse civilian government in their countries. Indeed, in Salvador they have shown rare courage and consistency, greater than the politicians have demonstrated.

The revolution in Salvador has failed because it was never genuine, and the only hope for true revolution lies with the participation of the Left in the government.

In fact the land reform program has been interrupted after its first, most sweeping phase, but not because of lack of commitment by the military. It has come about in part because the country is at war, and hence stability becomes more important than it would be if the country were at peace, and in part because, provoked by the guerrilla war, the Right has gained political strength.

The guerrillas want a negotiated settlement, but are blocked by a combination of the desire of the Salvadoran Government to retain all power, and the ideological opposition of the Government of the United States.

In fact, numerous captured documents show that the FMLN in Salvador, supported by Nicaragua and Cuba, has always viewed negotiations with the Salvadoran and American Governments as a *tactic*, designed to gain time in order to win military advantage.

There is a story that has never been publicly told before that warrants telling: during the first two years of the Reagan Administration, spokesmen for the FMLN, above all the socialist Guillermo Ungo, complained publicly that they could not find an American interlocutor to deal with. They hinted broadly that a negotiated settlement could be arranged if only the Americans had been willing to talk. In fact, a personal representative of the Secretary of State had sought out Ungo, asking for any proposal for

peace he might have. Ungo never responded, even though the message to him was passed through some of his personal friends in Europe. These friends became disillusioned with the passage of time, and the silence from the FMLN.

We cannot judge whether the current negotiations are serious on the part of the guerrillas, or for that matter on the part of the Nicaraguan regime, but the past gives little cause for optimism. We believe that the American Government, and those of the region, must act on the assumption that the counterrevolutionary forces of Central America will not negotiate in good faith, and that they must be defeated if the democratic revolution is to succeed.

At the same time, we are not willing to abandon all hope that democracy may yet prevail in Nicaragua without the military conquest of the country. If an Eden Pastora believes it possible, we are willing to entertain the notion.

All this means that the first order of business for those who cherish democracy is the defeat of the counterrevolutionaries. The war in Salvador must be won. If it is lost, all hope for democracy and for human rights will be lost along with the war. But it cannot be won in Salvador alone (as we have made clear, we believe that had it not been for foreign support, the FMLN would have been defeated some time ago). This means that the democratic forces of the region must give themselves a unified military structure.

The creation of some kind of regional military command goes hand in hand with the diplomatic initiatives for peace, which are themselves regional (the Contadora Group being the greatest example).

The current weakness of the fight against the counterrevolutionaries is shown by a consideration of the major counterrevolutionary stronghold in El Salvador's "Northern Tier," on its border with Honduras. The lack of joint operations against the FMLN's forces permits the guerrillas to move undetected and unthreatened across borders, making full strategic and tactical use of sanctuary in Honduras. Our understanding is that the Honduran armed forces are not, at present, strong enough to secure the country's borders with El Salvador while simultaneously defending themselves against the direct threat to Honduras itself from Nicaragua.

We therefore recommend that a multilateral security organization be created for Central America, pooling manpower, intelligence and other resources in order to defeat the counterrevolutionaries.

It is impossible to predict the effects of such a defeat. It would certainly hearten the forces for democracy throughout Central America, including

those inside Nicaragua and perhaps even Cuba as well. Even the modest effort required to liberate the tiny island of Grenada sent shock waves through the counterrevolutionary regimes, producing a flurry of diplomatic activity and other gestures designed to prevent pressure from being brought to bear directly against them.

One thing is certain: unless the war is won, democracy is doomed in Nicaragua, and has a highly uncertain future in the rest of Central America. Victory in the war is the best hope for democracy, for human rights, and for the economic well-being of the region.

We are not military experts, nor is this essay an attempt to suggest that the problems of Central America can be resolved by military means alone. We have rather attempted to address the moral and political issues facing Central America and the United States in the current crisis. Our conclusion is, in terms of the debate of the last several years, a highly controversial one: that an attempt at moderate, democratic revolution has taken place in Central America, led by forces that heretofore have rarely been considered to be revolutionary, and challenged by people calling themselves revolutionary. Our recommendations are, therefore, twofold: that those charged with designing and conducting the foreign policy of the United States first explain the realities of Central America to the American people and to the world at large; and that they then move expeditiously to assist the democratic forces of the region to defeat the counterrevolution. Then the brave example of Professor Ayau and his visionary friends in Guatemala City may initiate yet another democratic experiment, to our great satisfaction and long-term advantage.

If the counterrevolution is thwarted, we can then turn to the second great task awaiting Central America's energies: the enrichment of the people through the development of their societies. We have left this very important point to the last, for two reasons: first, because no orderly social and economic development can take place so long as these countries are under siege from the counterrevolution; and second, because it has been extremely difficult to gain Congressional support in the United States for the economic development of Central America and the Caribbean. We believe that one main reason for the lack of such support has been the failure to understand the stakes in the Central American conflict, and hopefully this is being remedied. But there is another reason for the lack of political support, one with which we sympathize: foreign aid programs have, with rare exceptions, failed to deliver the results we had hoped for. The so-called "block grants"—government-to-government gifts—have more often than not enriched a small elite, and not achieved

real development. It is for this reason that we wish to add one final suggestion for American policy, provided that the defeat of the counterrevolutionaries is carried out: let us not give to Central America the sort of economic presents that will only make it harder to build equitable societies. In our view, this means that we should assist the Central Americans in developing their own industries and businesses, help them learn skills, techniques and modern methods of manufacture and commerce, and join with them in projects of reciprocal utility. Such programs must be aimed at institutions and individuals, rather than at the Central American states as such. For we have learned that central planning, by whatever form of government, simply does not work. We Americans must accordingly work with the enterprising groups and individuals in Central America who alone can complete the transformation of their societies, and lead them into the family of successful democratic nations.

These challenges are daunting indeed, but the future of this hemisphere will be determined by our response to them.