

CPA/C Chrono

THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

NFAC 4603-81

National Intelligence Officers

23 July 1981

NOTE FOR: The Director

SUBJECT: Articles by Constantine Menges

This is a good piece by Menges.

He concentrates on the extraordinary degree to which social democrats have supported Marxist-Leninist groups in Latin America, especially in Nicaragua, and the apparent reasons for this support.

I'll be seeing him for lunch on Friday, 24 July and can pass along any comments from you (rather than writing him).

[Redacted Signature]

Henry S. Rowen /

- 1-DCI
- 1-DDCI
- 1-ER
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- 1-H.Rowen

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Executive Secretary
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NFAC-4528-81

July 14, 1981

Mr. William Casey
Director
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington,
D. C. 20505

Dear Mr. Casey:

During our last conversation I promised to send you a copy of my most recent article on Central America. A copy is enclosed:

"Central America and its Enemies"
Commentary, August, 1981

In addition I thought you might want to see a written outline of my perspective on Central America and Mexico. This summarizes the conversation we had and briefings I have also given at State, Defense, and the NSC.

With all good wishes.

Cordially,

Constantine C. Menges

Constantine C. Menges

Enc: as stated and "Central Americ/Mexico: the Present Opportunity and Danger", 6/8/81

CCM/sg

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CENTRAL AMERICA AND ITS ENEMIES**35—COMMENTARY—AUG. '81—FL 8545**

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1—Menges—Article—

CONSTANTINE MENGES, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is on the staff of the Hudson Institute where he specializes in American foreign policy.

THAT there has been a dramatic increase in Central American revolutionary violence in the past four years is obvious to everyone. What is not so obvious, however, is that this increase has been accompanied by the presence of four international forces supporting the groups engaged in such revolutionary violence: first, Cuba and other Communist countries along with the regional Communist parties; second, Palestinian terrorists and some radical Arab states; third, Mexico; fourth, virtually all social-democratic governments as well as the parties that make up the Socialist International.

I

BY NOW the role of the Cuban and Communist groups in Nicaragua and El Salvador is quite well known. As late as 1977, the State Department described the Sandinista movement (FSLN) in Nicaragua as a "small, pro-Castro, Marxist terrorist group" with little popular backing. In 1978, revolutionary violence began to gather momentum after the leader of the genuinely democratic opposition forces, Pedro Chamorro, was murdered by still-unknown terrorists. By early 1979, with active Cuban encouragement, all the Marxist-Leninist groups were unified and then entered into a coalition with democratic and other non-Communist elements which were also opposed to the Somoza regime. In July 1979, this coalition of democratic political groups and Communist-led guerrillas overthrew Somoza and took power.

Since July 1979, the Communist and radical Left groups have made a hidden but nevertheless intense effort to consolidate their power within the nine-person FSLN directorate. In contrast, the much more loosely organized democratic groups represented by various independent political parties, non-Communist business and labor associations, most of the Catholic Church, and most of the population have been steadily weakened by a strategy of ambiguous but unremitting harassment and persecution.

As a result, Nicaragua today is nearly under the control of the Communist groups. A new secret police has been built with Cuban and East German help, and a new army has been established with the help of thousands of Cuban advisers, and a neighborhood-informant network, called the Sandinista Defense Committees, has been established in imitation of the Cuban block committees. These three instruments of social control are in the hands of the FSLN directorate and are being strengthened with Cuban and other Communist help in order to provide a base for irreversible power. In spite of written promises to the Organization of American States before the July 1979 victory, political and civil rights are being repressed and free elections have been "postponed" until 1985.

In El Salvador, three groups are competing: a centrist civil-military coalition, the extreme Right, and an extreme Left coalition led by the unified command of five different Marxist-Leninist groups. Here too Cuban involvement has been clear at least since March 1980 when the Carter administration publicly told Congress that Cuban support for the terrorist groups in El Salvador and Guatemala included "advice, propaganda, safe haven, training, arms . . . along with men and material. . . ." In his last few days in office, Carter was finally provoked by a Communist-led "general offensive" into sending military aid to "support the Salvadoran government in its struggle against left-wing terrorism supported covertly with arms, ammunition, training, and political and military advice by Cuban and other Communist nations."

Shortly thereafter the new Reagan administration issued a white paper on the extensive Cuban-managed international Communist networks supporting the revolutionary process in El Salvador. It discussed the "covert delivery to El Salvador of nearly two hundred tons of arms brought mostly through Cuba and Nicaragua" and the "major effort . . . to provide cover" for this operation by supplying arms of Western manufacture and by supporting an "organization known as the Revolutionary Democratic Front to seek non-Communist political support."

II

UNLIKE Cuban involvement, the role of the PLO and other Palestinian and radical Arab terrorist groups in Central America has remained virtually unexplored. Thus when the Reagan administration recently told Congress that "radical Arab states, the PLO, and the terrorist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have furnished guns, arms, and training" to Marxist revolutionaries in Central America, it was opening a subject that had for too long been treated with silence. Yet it provides an excellent example of cooperation among anti-Western terrorist groups.

Shortly after the victory in Nicaragua, a Sandinista leader said: "There is a long-standing blood unity between us and the Palestinian revolution. We have long had close relations with the Palestinians. Many of the units belonging to the Sandinista movement were at Palestinian revolution bases in Jordan. . . . As an example of our cooperation with the Palestinian revolution, a number of our comrades took part in the operation to divert four planes which the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine seized and landed at an airfield in Jordan." Yasir Arafat too, during a visit to Nicaragua in July 1980 boasted about the significant help the PLO had given the revolutionaries.

In El Salvador the extreme Left has provided evidence of its close relations with the Palestinian extremists by often condemning the "ultra-rightist alliance of Washington, Tel Aviv, Guatemala City, and Caracas." Tel Aviv is consistently first after Washington, and before Guatemala, in most of the condemnations issued by the various revolutionary groups in Central America.

As to the involvement of radical Arab states, former CIA director Stansfield Turner informed the American people on the television program *Sixty Minutes* that "Libya is providing extensive help for the revolutionaries in Central America" as part of the "internationalization of the revolution down there." This covert support became more visible in April 1981 when Libya provided \$100 million to help Nicaragua cope with the loss of \$15 million in U.S. aid.

It is obvious that the tie that binds the terrorists of Central American and the Middle East is their common enemy, the United States. For the PLO and other Palestinian and radical Arab groups, giving help to the revolutionaries of Central America is a strategic investment. Whether successful or not, this violence distracts the United States and saps its energies. But neither the Cubans nor the Palestinian extremists could have imagined that the Central American revolutions would have brought about such a deep division between the United States on the one side and Mexico and the social democrats on the other.

III

ONE observer has described the Nicaraguan revolution as the fruit of a new "Havana-Mexico-Social-Democratic Axis." I have already sketched Havana's work in Nicaragua on behalf of Marxist-Leninist groups. As for Mexico and the social democrats, in April 1979, the Marxist FSLN and the "group of twelve," which represented the genuinely democratic opposition to Somoza, met in Mexico City with leaders of Mexico and the Socialist International. The Sandinistas were blunt in telling their hosts that "moral aid is not enough . . . we need material help to guarantee the victory." On May 4, 1979, there was a worldwide gathering of Socialist International leaders in Jan José, Costa Rica, specifically to review the situation in Nicaragua. There it was decided to undertake a "total offensive against Somoza." The representative of the social democrats of the Dominican Republic declared: "If the Nicaraguans want words, we'll give that to them, if they want money, we'll give them money, if they need arms, we will give them arms, if they need men and volunteers, we'll search for them until there are enough to overthrow Somoza."

After the revolutionary victory in July 1979, the obvious next question was whether the Cuban-supported Marxist-Leninist groups or the genuinely democratic forces would prevail in Nicaragua. Every student of Communist revolution and, indeed, of this century's history, knows that the united front is a standard technique for achieving revolutionary success. In 1920, Lenin drew on his successful experience with the social democrats against the Russian Czar to write: "The Communist movement should always make use of the united front and support its social-democratic allies as the rope supports the hanged man."

This pattern of building a coalition with the social democrats was also used by Fidel Castro. In 1957 and 1958, Castro described himself frequently as a "Jeffersonian democrat" and a person who intended to bring democracy to Cuba. After his victory, Castro admitted candidly that he had shaped his initial program "with care," to prevent his movement from being "very small and limited." After he had crushed the social democrats and moved beyond the transitional state of apparent power-sharing, Castro said: "If it had been a more radical program . . . the revolutionary movement against Batista would not, of course, have gained the breadth it obtained and made possible the victory."

Many Latin American social democrats also shared in the "Cuban mistake": endorsing Castro without establishing a separate power base. The failure of their hopes for democratic change there should have demonstrated the dangers of acting in coalition with the violent Left. And many European social democrats, like Willy Brandt, would have cause to remember the Communist success in dominating much of the Republican coalition in the Spanish Civil War against Franco and more recently the Portuguese experience. There, follow-

ing the 1974 revolution which ended the five-decade long Salazar/Caetano regime, the Communist party with strong covert Soviet support moved quickly to dominate most government organizations, trade unions, and communications, and seemed to be heading inexorably toward dictatorial power. Only the failure of a Communist coup attempt in 1975 and a concerted effort by democratic parties and governments in Europe to help both the Christian Democrats and the social democrats and oppose the Communists resulted in the free elections of 1976 and the functioning democracy that Portugal has today.

These revolutionary experiences—perhaps exotic to the average American political leader—are an important and living element of the tradition of the European and Latin American social-democratic parties. Paying heed to it would have meant, in Nicaragua, an effort on the part of Mexico and the social-democratic parties to strengthen the genuinely democratic groups and to prevent the covert Cuban strengthening of the Marxist-Leninist groups.

This did not happen. Instead, a number of European countries with social-democratic parties in power (together with the United States under Carter) contributed more than \$600 million in financial aid to Nicaragua in the first year after the revolution but made no serious effort to encourage democratic institutions. In addition, a consortium of international banks renegotiated the debt of Nicaragua on generous terms so that an additional \$500 million of resources were made available. Much of this aid came as a result of the support of the Socialist International through its member parties Europe and Latin America.

In August 1979, the Socialist International said it would do everything it could to provide help for the "people of Nicaragua" and it sent a delegation of leaders headed by Mario Soares of Portugal to visit Managua. Soares, at that time, said that "aid should be unconditionally given. The Chilean revolution failed because no one gave it a hand." In September 1979, the social-democratic president of Costa Rica said specifically that the Socialist International "has clearly established its collaboration and support for the junta of national reconstruction and the directorate of the FSLN."

This was a disturbing statement because the FSLN, as a Marxist-Leninist party, was not the social-democratic party of Nicaragua. In fact, by then, the genuinely democratic parties, including the Nicaraguan Social Democrats, were already beginning to become very apprehensive about the close links with Cuba the Sandinista directorate was establishing in the building of a new army and a new secret police, and about the mounting evidence that the promises of free elections and re-

spect for political and civil rights were not going to be kept. The Nicaraguan democratic parties appealed to Mexico, Venezuela, and the Socialist International to take these matters up with the Sandinista directorate. Instead, President López Portillo of Mexico visited Nicaragua in November 1979 and expressed his fraternal solidarity with the new government while making clear that Mexican aid would be totally "unconditioned." López Portillo justified his passive posture concerning democratic elections in the name of Mexico's historic principle of "nonintervention." Nor did the Socialist International provide any help to the genuinely democratic groups.

By the spring and summer of 1980, the Sandinistas had announced their plans to build an army three times the size of the army under Somoza. An estimated 4-5,000 Cubans were in Nicaragua, and the Cubans and East Germans continued strengthening the new secret police as well as the neighborhood-informant committees. In the summer of 1980, the four democratic parties of Nicaragua made a plaintive and urgent public appeal for free elections and civil liberties. In the fall and winter of 1980, first the Carter and then the Reagan administration provided Mexican and social-democratic leaders with evidence of Nicaraguan support for revolutionary violence in El Salvador and Guatemala. None of these facts or appeals led to any change in the policies of Mexico and the social democrats, policies which drew no distinction between the totalitarian and democratic Left.

IV

DURING 1980, while Cuba worked to help its friends in Nicaragua consolidate power, and while Mexico and the social democrats continued to ignore these harsh realities, the focus of revolutionary violence in Central America shifted to El Salvador.

Following a December 1979 meeting in Havana, the five Marxist-Leninist terrorist groups and the Communist party of El Salvador agreed to form a united command, publicly announced in January 1980. This extreme Left coalition has followed a consistent political-military strategy which has included relentless terrorist, military, and propaganda attacks on the current government to fragment and isolate it internally and internationally, along with a steady build-up in the organizational and military strength of the unified command. Growing from an estimated 400 terrorists in 1979 to about 1,000 in 1979, the Communist-led coalition, now called the FMLN, fielded a well-armed force of 5-6,000 in the January 1981 "general offensive."

While Cuba and the regional Communist networks played their well-established role of training and indoctrinating guerrilla fighters and establishing arms-supply and infiltration routes, Mexico and the social democrats made their own important contributions to the revolutionary cause. In January 1980 a West German social-democratic political-action foundation held a conference in Costa Rica for the purpose of declaring its solidarity with and legitimizing the new revolutionary coalition of El Salvador. Mexico joined in, providing financial support and facilities which permitted its territory to become, in the words of the *New York Times*, the "guerrillas' propaganda base."

Although the government of El Salvador had implemented a major land-reform program and had nationalized all banks and agricultural export companies, this had little effect on the March 1980 meeting of the Socialist International. The member parties, including the democratic-socialist parties of Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and other major U.S. allies, denounced the new land reforms as a "false program of reform and repression" and warned against a "North American military intervention." A senior State Department official had given Willy Brandt, president of the SI, a complete briefing on the extensive evidence which showed that the Salvadoran revolutionary front was Communist and tightly linked to Cuba, but Brandt made no effort to achieve any balance in the discussion. In fact, the Socialist International invited Fidel Castro to speak as an honored guest, passed a resolution calling for Puerto Rican independence as the "only solution," and urged alliance with the guerrilla forces in Latin America. Then at its June 1980 conference the Socialist International passed a resolution declaring that it "fully supports the struggle of the Revolutionary Democratic Front [FDR] . . . in El Salvador," as the new united-front organization was called.

The Mexican foreign minister now began to speak publicly about the need for a "Nicaraguan-style solution" in El Salvador, and the supportive activities of the Mexican governing party, the PRI, grew steadily. The next month, during a visit to Germany, López Portillo met with Willy Brandt and the two agreed to ignore U.S. concerns and continue their activities on behalf of the revolutionary Left in Central America. In the meantime, the campaign of political terror was proudly being described by the "liberation front" in frequent bulletins such as this report of May 25, 1980:

The political-military offensive of the liberation forces . . . has been effectively implemented through constant sabotage actions and bold devastating attacks. . . This offensive was necessary to announce the threat of war to the repressive corps of this small nation . . . which . . . has been invaded by the regular Honduran and Guatemalan armies [and] thousands of soldiers and all kinds of planes, helicopters, tanks, and armored vehicles from the United States and Israel.

The report goes on to list the killing of 914 soldiers, national guard, police, and "informers," which accounted for about half of the estimated 2,000 deaths up to that time. The anti-Israel element reflects the persistent theme of linkage among the "imperialist" enemies.

In June 1980 the leader of the Salvadoran Communist party went on a journey to the Eastern bloc where he obtained specific commitments from Moscow that it would encourage its partners like Vietnam and Ethiopia to donate hundreds of tons of (mainly American) weapons for use in the "general offensive." Shortly thereafter while on a trip to Havana, the Mexican president expressed his "continued solidarity with the Cuban revolution," and Gustavo Carvajal Moreno, the leader of Mexico's ruling party, the PRI, agreed upon specific measures in support of the guerrillas in both El Salvador and Guatemala. This included commitments of financial and propaganda support as well as rumored help in the shipment of weapons through Mexican territory. In addition, the PRI promised to host a conference of "world solidarity" with the Salvadoran revolution in late November.

V.

BY JANUARY 1981 a new situation existed in El Salvador. The extreme Left had failed three times to obtain popular support for its attempted general strikes in 1980 (May, August, and December); the Salvadoran population had not rallied during the military offensive in January 1981, and the government forces had repulsed the attacks after a week of bloody fighting. Moreover, there was a new Reagan administration in Washington which seemed clear about its determination to prevent a Communist victory in El Salvador. Did this new situation lead to any change in the actions of Mexican or the social-democratic leaders?

The evidence to date is that both of these "friendly" participants in the contemporary politics of Central America have continued their support of the revolutionary Left. After the military offensive failed, the Socialist International issued a call for a worldwide economic embargo against El Salvador. Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky warned that "revolutionary movements in Latin America have gained sympathy in Europe" and that American backing for "dictatorships" like that in El Salvador "could provoke anti-American feelings in Europe worse than during the Vietnam war." In recent months the socialist International has reaffirmed its endorsement of the Revolutionary Democratic Front.

Mexico, if anything, became even more emphatic in its support of the Salvadoran revolutionaries. The president of the ruling party was sent to Nicaragua, where he said that country was "not alone" against the United States and pledged continued support for the revolutionary Left in El Salvador that "fights for its freedom." In February 1981, the "Permanent People's Tribunal" met in Mexico and concluded that the Salvadoran government was guilty of "carrying out genocidal policies . . . reminiscent of testimony offered at the International Tribunal in Nuremburg after World War II and . . . the U.S. was guilty of complicity in the perpetration of the crimes."

Next, just as the Reagan administration was threatening to act against Cuba unless it ceased providing weapons, funds, and training for Central American guerrillas, Mexico announced its first energy agreement with Castro.

VI

WHY have Mexico and the social-democratic parties decided to join with Cuba in supporting Central American revolutions? The explanation can be found in the influence of a strong, radical-leftist faction within the PRI and most social-democratic parties; in a theory of politics in developing countries which emphasizes anti-imperialism and nationalism while ignoring democracy and rejecting any notion of possible danger from forming coalitions with Communist groups; in a hidden *Realpolitik* which assumes that timely help for leftist revolutionaries will be repaid in domestic social peace and future international influence; and in a partisan interest in weakening such domestic rivals as Christian Democrats.

During the last decade these factors in different combinations and strengths in Mexico and among many social-democratic parties and governments in Europe have produced what Carl Gershman has accurately described as an alignment with "anti-Western revolutionary movements in the Third World" which include, besides the totalitarian Left in Central America, the PLO and other Palestinian terrorist groups and Marxist regimes and movements like SWAPO in southern Africa.

Due to its historic leadership, its wealth, and the role of Willy Brandt, the German social-democratic party currently is the most influential member of the Socialist International, and can best serve to illustrate how the current situation came about.*

* For a detailed analysis of the case of Mexico, see Carlos Rangel's article, "Mexico and Other Dominoes," in the June issue of COMMENTARY.

While the majority of German social democrats are moderates, they have permitted their international presence to be managed to a large degree by far Left groups. Yet the success of this growing minority faction also owes much to the fact that the socialist parties have for now abandoned both their commitment to democracy in the developing countries and their previous realism about Communism. Today's Socialist International, founded in 1951, issued a clear statement of principles which included the view that there can be no socialism without liberty and that Communism had deformed socialism and created a new imperialism. The 1962 Oslo Declaration repeated these views in eloquent terms, stating that "liberty and democratic self-government must not be surrendered."

Yet in 1974, the Socialist International, thanks largely to German initiatives, modified its statutes to permit non-democratic parties from developing areas to participate as "observers," and further changes toward cooperation with "socialist-oriented" but not necessarily democratic parties were welcomed by the Geneva revisions in 1976. This permitted groups such as the FSLN of Nicaragua and the New Jewel Movement of Grenada to participate. A next step was in 1978 at the Vancouver Congress where the Socialist International invited representatives from "socialist-oriented" dictatorships (such as Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau) and approved joint political action with forces of the Left including Marxist-Leninist parties.

Brandt himself explained this new viewpoint: in the Third World one should not expect political rights which have "too much of a European or North American stamp" because "he whose life is exposed to sheer misery can take only a minor interest in civil rights" other than "social human rights." This in effect implied a triple standard, one for the democratic nations, another for dictatorial governments or movements using leftist rhetoric, and a third for rightist dictatorships irrespective of their economic success. In May 1979 the social-democratic leaders of Latin America, Spain, Portugal, and Germany met in Costa Rica to plan their material support for the Nicaraguan revolution and declared that "they had to establish strategies to break with the anti-Communist ideologies . . . approved by the Latin American military and the government of the United States."

It should be noted that constant and increasing criticism of the U.S. along these lines by the social-democratic parties occurred while the Carter human-rights policy in Central America was in full flower. Although the United States joined in contributing to the \$625 million in economic aid provided to Nicaragua by the democracies, and though President Carter publicly stated until his last three days in office that there were no serious signs of a Marxist dictatorship being established in revolutionary Nicaragua, the social-democrats seemed to take little notice. Indeed, a Portuguese socialist declared: "For Europe, Carter sells a policy of human rights and for Central America a policy of repression."

Beyond muddled and radical ideology, beyond the fashionable and condescending view that democracy cannot be expected in the Third World, is the deep anxiety of many European leaders about their countries' dependence on raw materials from the Third World. They believe that a policy of fraternal cooperation with ruling or soon-to-be-dominant parties in countries which supply those needed resources might produce positive economic effects. (Mexico, for its part, hopes to buy itself immunity from external revolutionary pressures.) Combine these perceptions of national interest with the twin myths that democracy is impossible and revolution is inevitable in regions like Central America and the justification for the recent policies becomes strong even for many moderate social democrats.

Last, there is the partisan dimension. No group likes to admit grave errors in judgment. When the "united front" with Communism fails once again and the slide toward totalitarianism becomes clear, who do social democrats do? As Jean-Francois Revel points out: "If they remain silent things just get worse, but if they were to rebel they would have to confess publicly that they were wrong about the Communists. . . ." This is not only difficult emotionally and institutionally, it is not good politics, and for that reason social democrats will usually find other explanations for why things went badly. But for the German and most other socialist parties, there is an even more direct partisan reason for refusing to become realistic about Central America. Their domestic political rivals, the Christian Democrats, are on the other side.

In marked contrast to the social-democratic parties, the Christian Democrats of Europe and Latin America have shown a consistent commitment to democratic social reform in Central America and a sober realism about the threats posed by both the extreme Left and the extreme Right.

Venezuela in particular, under President Luis Herrera Campias, a Christian Democrat, has been a positive democratic example and influence. Upon becoming president, he continued the support for the Nicaraguan revolutionary coalition begun by his social-democratic predecessor by providing \$100 million in economic aid to the new government. At the same time, however, in early 1980, the Venezuelan government began to speak publicly about the need to safeguard the democratic opportunities in Nicaragua by permitting political and civil liberties.

So far as El Salvador is concerned, the Venezuelan government and Christian Democratic party have contended that "the current civil-military junta represents the political center, and is therefore the only hope for a moderate solution to the ongoing civil war." Since José Napoleon Duarte, the Salvadoran Christian Democratic president, had been deprived of his election victory by the extreme Right in 1972 and then lived in Venezuelan exile until 1979, he has many close friends among the Venezuelan Christian Democrats. They understand the enormous difficulty of reformers who must struggle against both extremes simultaneously. Though it is now forgotten, in 1960 the new democratic government of Venezuela found itself under simultaneous assault by the extreme Right, including Trujillo, the Dominican dictator, and the extreme Left supported by Fidel Castro. Venezuelan Christian Democrats recall that they joined with their social-democratic colleagues in welcoming the victory of Castro but soon the thousands of innocent firing-squad victims and political prisoners helped them see their mistake.

Other Latin American Christian Democratic parties, many of which are in opposition to authoritarian regimes, have frequently expressed support for the Duarte party and endorsed the Salvadoran social reforms. In Germany, too, the Christian Democrats have tried to broaden the discussion in the European media by presenting the facts about El Salvador; they have also tried to persuade the Schmidt government to restore aid to the Duarte regime, especially in view of the fact that Nicaragua has received large German contributions. Dr. Hennig Wegener, a CDU member of the German parliament, has known Duarte and El Salvador for some years, and after a visit in January 1981, wrote:

El Salvador cannot be conquered militarily any longer. There will probably be a second "final offensive." . . . The people are not with the guerrillas. They have enough of force and terror. They want peace and social reform. Will this occur? The agrarian reform is a hopeful beginning. . . .

[However] the political isolation of El Salvador that has been achieved might be decisive. It is not just a product of Communist deception. The Socialist International has played a major role. Whoever believes that the [social-democratic] titular head of the FDR . . . will play a real role after a guerrilla victory will be brutally surprised. . . . It is incomprehensible that the German Federal Republic has supported a United Nations resolution on El Salvador that was drafted by Cuba, Angola, and Nicaragua, that is practically by the Soviet Union . . . and that holds the officials of the Salvadoran government alone responsible for all the suffering there.

There is no question that the international solidarity among the Christian Democrats has been of immense political, material, and moral help to their associates in Central America. The tragedy of the social-democratic policy is not only that it strengthens the Communists but also that it removes social democrats from active cooperation with Christian Democrats in building democratic institutions, as occurred in Portugal and Spain.

VII

WHAT must the U.S. do to improve the prospects for democratic reform and prevent Communist success in Central America?

A first step—which the Reagan administration has already taken in El Salvador—is to recognize the danger and provide a balanced program of bilateral help to the threatened countries. Second, there is a need to work with transnational groups such as parties, trade unions, civic, business, and religious organizations to strengthen those genuinely democratic and moderate forces which exist within each country. Third, together with friendly governments, there must be competent action to neutralize the terrorist networks established by the violent Left in the region with help from Cuba, other Communist countries, and the radical Palestinians.

As it happens, there may now be a greater disposition in the region to support such an approach, not only because of the actions of the Reagan administration but also because Castro launched a terrorist offensive last February and March that backfired. Within a few weeks, Cuban-armed Colombian guerrillas were shipped via Panama into Colombia (and caught); attacks and death threats were directed against U.S. personnel in Panama and Costa Rica; Honduras suffered an embassy attack, the bombing of its parliament, and an airplane hijacking; and there was an unauthorized Cuban raid on the embassy of Ecuador in Havana. (Last year, moreover, Castro ordered the assassination of the president of Costa Rica because he had given sanctuary to many of the Cubans who fled in the spring of 1980.)

Rather than intimidating the target governments, these "responses" by Castro to Reagan have brought about the suspension of diplomatic relations with Cuba by Colombia and Ecuador; an apparent end to the cozy working relationship Panama believed it had established with Cuba; and a crackdown by Costa Rica on various exile groups that had been part of the Cuban-managed propaganda and arms-smuggling networks.

But can Mexico and the social democrats be persuaded to withdraw their support for the revolutionary Left in El Salvador? Can they be persuaded to oppose both extremes and work with the existing democratic reform groups, including the Christian Democrats? Can they be made to see that success for the extreme Left in El Salvador would soon be followed in Guatemala by increased repression and guerrilla terrorism leading to Communist victory there too, and the high probability of revolutionary violence and counter-terror in Mexico, with devastating damage to the prospects of democratic development in the entire region?

Yet El Salvador can also be a positive turning point. The centrist coalition is implementing reforms and holding firm against both extremes. It is becoming known that the totalitarian Left has systematically deceived the social democrats of Europe and a variety of groups in the United States. If the guerrillas had won last January, their lies might never have been exposed, but there is still a chance to confront the social democrats with their misconceptions about El Salvador and Nicaragua. Success in El Salvador is possible. This tragic conflict represents a major opportunity for Mexico to reclaim its realism, and at least some of the member parties of the Socialist International to reclaim their lost commitment to genuine democracy.