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Report of the Delegation for Peace In Central America June 27 – July 11, 1985



Cover Photograph

Residents of the town of Perquin in the province of Morazan, El Salvador, and other surrounding towns demonstrated against the bombings of their homes, schools, health clinics, and other civilians by the Duarte government and the Reagan administration. The El Salvadoreans met with the Peace Delegation in July 1985.

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Health Clinic in Perquin, Morazan, El Salvador, destroyed by aerial bombing by the Duarte Air Force, July 1985.

The following members of the Delegation for Peace in Central America have reviewed and signed this report:

- Mr. Aris Anagnos
- Mrs. Carolyn Anagnos
- Ms. Sandra Gladstone
- Dr. Jesus G. Nieto
- Mr. Eli Sandoval
- Ms. Callie Wight

This report was initially prepared and submitted by Margarita S. Studemeister, Latin American specialist and resource person to the Delegation for Peace in Central America, along with delegates who provided input in the writing and production of the document.

Introduction

The Delegation for Peace in Central America visited Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba between June 27 and July 11, 1985. The Delegation was composed of Hispanic and other civic leaders of Southern California representing regional and national organizations concerned about the increasing military involvement of the United States government in Central America. Of particular concern to the Delegation was the stagnation of peace initiatives and the strong emphasis on military solutions to the conflicts in the area.

The Peace Delegation mission consisted of obtaining a general assessment of the nature and effects of armed conflicts and in exploring the willingness of governments and peoples of Central America to support and implement peaceful solutions. The Peace Delegation arranged a series of meetings, participated in social events and attended public ceremonies in Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba. The Delegation met with many government and opposition leaders, political parties, religious, peasant, labor, human rights and media groups in order to gather the widest possible range of opinions.

The Delegation members investigated several key questions. These were: Has the Contadora process advanced towards the demilitarization of Central America? Do Hondurans approve the U.S. militarization of their country? Has the Duarte government opened up a democratic process for the political participation of previously excluded sectors? Are the armed opposition forces in El Salvador sincerely interested in resuming dialogue with the government of President Duarte? What are the effects of the war waged by the U.S.-backed contras against Nicaragua? Is Cuba promoting conflicts in Central America? Is the cause of the conflict an East-West confrontation or are there other causes? Is U.S. policy towards Central America enhancing the possibility of a peaceful settlement to the conflicts?

While traveling in Central America, the Delegation learned about a series of actions taken by our government that severely hinder on-going peace initiatives in the region.

For instance,

The House of Representatives approved the Foley-Conte amendment authorizing the use of U.S. troops if Nicaragua "acquired advanced jet fighter plans, allowed the introduction of nuclear weapons, was involved in a hijacking to which the United States felt it was necessary to respond, or to counter what was termed 'a clear and present danger of attack' against the United States or its allies." (*New York Times*, June 19, 1985). This vote was qualified by Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) as a "dangerous blueprint for American involvement." The Peace Delegation was reminded of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin resolution which marked President Lyndon B. Johnson's stepped up involvement in Vietnam.

Also on June 27, the *New York Times* reported that the F.B.I. trained a special unit of the Salvadoran police to investigate human rights abuses, and that the U.S. trained a special counter-terrorist unit, and commented, "The moves appear to be part of growing official American involvement in the training and supervision of police forces [in El Salvador], despite Congressional restrictions on direct American aid to foreign police units under most circumstances." In the case of El Salvador, special exceptions were granted by Congress.

The Peace Delegation was startled to read about President Reagan's intentions to order a U.S. air strike on areas held by the armed opposition forces in El Salvador (*Newsweek*, July 15, 1985).

On July 8, President Reagan characterized Nicaragua and Cuba as "terrorist states" (*New York Times*, July 9, 1985).

According to the July 11 *Excelsior*, President Duarte offered to conclude an alliance with Honduras against Nicaragua, signaling another attempt to prepare conditions towards the regionalization of the conflict and thus further reinforcing the Central American sentiment that such an eventuality is to be expected.

The Peace delegation hopes that this report will help American citizens and policymakers to better understand the Central American conflict and the United States' role in the region and, in this way, contribute to the on-going efforts for peace in the hemisphere.

The Contadora Process

"It's Easy To Get In, Hard To Get Out."

The Contadora process was initiated in January of 1983 by Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama as an effort to reduce tensions and to advance peaceful solutions to conflicts in the Central American region. The history of U.S. military interventions in the internal affairs of Latin American countries is one factor that has led the Contadora nations to take a strong stand against intervention. Mexico's Foreign Relations Minister, Mr. Bernardo Sepulveda Amor, explained to the Peace Delegation that Mexico was "extremely concerned" over the increased militarization and possible direct intervention by the United States government in Central America. He emphasized that peace in the region is in the national security interests of Mexico, the Central American countries and ultimately the United States.

In Spring of last year, Contadora nations committed over one hundred technical advisors and diplomats to work on a compromise draft which the four Contadora countries endorsed on September 7, 1984. The Contadora draft agreement includes measures which would halt the arms buildup in both Nicaragua and El Salvador, check the growth of armed forces in the region, end external support to insurgent movements in Central America, send foreign military advisers home from Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador, control military maneuvers, and close down U.S. military bases in Central America. Moreover, for the first time, the Contadora draft agreement addressed the issue of national reconciliation.

The Contadora document needed the approval of the five Central American nations. According to President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, the U.S. government had pressed Nicaragua through the Manzanillo talks, which began in June 1984, to support Contadora. To the surprise of the Reagan Administration, Nicaragua agreed to sign on September 21, 1984. The United States government, however, quickly convinced its Central American allies—El Salvador, Honduras and Costa Rica—to raise technical objections on the issues of control and verification that affected U.S. military activities in the region. Even when the Contadora group presented a revised draft agreement based on these objections, Nicaragua was still the only country willing to accept. This impasse led the Contadora nations recently to change the discussion to the topic of armament issues and security affairs, according to President Ortega.

Latin American Proposal for Peace in Central America

Central Americans in general approve of the Contadora process. According to Dr. Carlos Sosa Coello, an Innovation and Unity Party Congressional candidate in Honduras, the Contadora peace initiative represents a Latin American proposal to achieve peace in Central America. He criticized the abstract level of the proposals contained in the draft agreement and the insufficient leverage which the Contadora nations have to pressure the United States into concrete support for the draft agreement. He believes that the endorsement of stronger nations such as West Germany, France, Spain and Japan could reinforce the initiative vis-a-vis the United States.

Dr. Sosa, President Ortega and Mr. Sepulveda, among others, underscored that the abstract nature of the Contadora discussions contrast sharply with the accelerated militarization of Central America.

Mr. Salvador Samayoa, member of the Political-Diplomatic Commission of the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation and the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FMLN-FDR) the Salvadoran opposition forces, warned that the implementation of specific measures contained in the Contadora draft agreement could lead to "political errors". For example, the absence of specific criteria defining legitimate forces in the internal conflicts of Central American countries affect the process and perspectives of the national reconciliation measures.

Fragile Peace Process

Mr. Sepulveda considered that the peace process in Central America is "fragile" at the present time. He cited the cumbersome discussion of the Contadora draft agreement, the breakdown of the peace talks between the Duarte government and the Salvadoran opposition as well as the U.S.-Nicaragua Manzanillo talks, the financial support for the *contras*, the economic embargo against Nicaragua and the overall militarization of Central America by the Reagan Administration.

In Cuba, the Peace delegation learned that the government of Fidel Castro supports the Contadora process and considers the peacefully negotiated settlement of Central American conflicts not only urgent but the only viable alternative. Moreover, President Castro pointed out that the enormous external debts plaguing Latin American countries, which they are unable to pay off, present a new situation which necessitates a voluntary adjustment by all parties involved in order to avoid further turmoil and upheaval in Latin America.

The Spanish Ambassador to Honduras, Fernando Gonzalez Camina, also perceived the Contadora process as an appropriate alternative to the military course promoted by the Reagan Administration. He identified problems of underdevelopment, the lack of basic freedoms, century-old social structures and the lack of adequate resources as elements that demand social change.

Ambassador Gonzalez explained to the Peace Delegation that a military solution to Central American conflicts not only risks escalating and regionalizing a war that has an uncertain outcome but also postpones social change indefinitely at a great cost for humanity.

In reference to the uncertain outcome of a U.S. direct intervention, Mr. Sepulveda stated: "It's easy to get in, hard to get out."



U.S. Role In Honduras

"The United States Government Will Supply the Weapons, and Hondurans Will Provide the Dead."

In 1981 Hondurans elected their first civilian president in a decade, yet the military seems to continue to hold power in the country. It has been very receptive to U.S. military assistance and presence in Honduras. For instance, U.S. military aid to Honduras rose from \$4.0 million in 1980 to \$77.5 million in 1984; the U.S. has either upgraded or built new at least 10 airstrips in Honduras. U.S. observation planes based at one of these bases, La Palmerola, fly daily over Nicaragua and El Salvador, while sophisticated radar scans installed by the United States monitor air and sea traffic throughout Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The United States government has invested \$32 million in the construction of the Regional Center for Military Training where Honduran, and until recently, Salvadoran, troops receive instruction. While the actual number of U.S. military personnel stationed in Honduras fluctuates, over 10,000 U.S. troops participated in the recently held Big Pine III joint military exercises. The Honduran Army has tacitly opened its territory to the 15,000 U.S.-backed **contra** forces, which launch attacks into Nicaragua with the objective of destabilizing and overthrowing that duly-elected government.

One week before the Peace delegation arrived in Central America, a U.S. Army twin rotor CH-47 Chinook helicopter flew twice from U.S.-built La Palmerola air base in Honduras into northeastern El Salvador to recover downed Salvadoran UH-1H helicopters. Spokesmen for the Reagan Administration, according to the July 3 *Washington Post*, said it was "the first time a U.S.-piloted aircraft has been used in a recovery mission during the five-year Salvadoran civil war." The Peace Delegation viewed a videotape footage of this operation filmed by the FMLN Radio Venceremos Communication System during the Delegation visit to Morazan province in El Salvador.

"Honduras Is A Military Occupied Territory."

In Tegucigalpa, the Peace Delegation had the unique opportunity one evening to meet with representatives of political parties, women's youth and human rights organizations, peasant groups and labor unions and independent Hondurans. The meeting's host explained to the Delegation that it was the first time that so many individuals and organizations with differing political perspectives gathered together to discuss U.S. involvement in their country. They, in turn, stated that their overwhelming desire for a peaceful solution to problems in Central America and their deep concern over increasing U.S. involvement in Honduras brought them together. On these issues, their positions oppose President Suazo Cordova's collaboration with the Reagan Administration.

"Honduras is a militarily occupied territory," began Dr. Juan Al-mendarez, former Rector of the National Autonomous University of Honduras. Three armies operate in Honduran territory: the U.S., the Honduran and the U.S.-financed **contra** forces. Until September 1984, Salvadoran troops—"the soldiers who massacred Hondurans" in the 1969 war with El Salvador, according to a Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers' leader—were being trained by the U.S. in

the Regional Military Training Center in Puerto Castilla on the Atlantic Coast. This constituted an affront to the majority of Hondurans who consider El Salvador their traditional enemy. Dr. Edgardo Caceres of the Liberal Democratic Revolutionary Movement, Mr. Fernando Garcia of the Central American Economic Integration Bank and Dr. Enrique Aguilar Paz of the Innovation and Unity Party agreed that this situation has deprived Honduras of its national sovereignty and threatens its national security and interests. The Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers' leadership blamed President Suazo Cordova's government for subjecting Honduras to the objectives of the United States government.

An Unwanted War

Hondurans feel that their country could be pulled into a war they do not want. Mr. Caceres and Mr. Garcia recalled that the Honduran Army participated in the 1954 overthrow of a progressive and reformist Guatemalan government and in the 1965 intervention of the Dominican Republic, both ominous precedents that were organized by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The majority of Hondurans with whom the Peace delegation met are of the opinion that their country could once again be drawn into a war as a result of the traditional antagonism with El Salvador over the century-old border dispute or even more likely, in the context of the **contras'** unrestrained activities within Honduras and against Nicaragua. Mr. Garcia feared that the Reagan Administration could follow the precedents set in 1954 and 1965 by using the Honduran Army to fight its war in Central America. In this way U.S. youth would be spared the bloody participation in yet another military conflict. One leader of the Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers expressed the commonly held fear of so many Hondurans this way: "The United States government will supply the weapons, and the Hondurans will provide the dead."

Hondurans Differ On the Threat of Nicaragua

Dr. Ramon Villeda of the Honduran Foreign Relations Ministry believes that Nicaragua has an expansionist policy in the region. Dr. Sosa explained that Nicaragua cannot afford to export revolution. The Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers considered that Nicaragua is not a threat to Honduras. Mr. German Leitzelar, Congressional candidate for the Innovation and Unity Party, stated that from a geopolitical perspective, the Reagan Administration reinforces Honduras militarily in order to prepare it to respond to a U.S. perceived threat from Nicaragua's "expansionism", but that it is not being prepared to counteract aggression from Honduras' traditional enemy, El Salvador. Mr. Conrado Napky of the Liberal Unity Front, said that Honduras' enemy is the population explosion in El Salvador which stimulated El Salvador's territorial claims against Honduras. Dr. Roberto Aviles, from the private enterprise sector, explained that El Salvador expands by conquering territory, in reference to the 1969 Honduras-El Salvador border war. Mr. Efraim Bu Giron, presidential candidate for the Bu Giron Movement and President of the Congress, talked about the **contra** presence in Honduras which could provoke a border incident that might spark a Honduras-Nicaragua war.

U.S. Role In Honduras

"One Less Refugee, One More Hand."

The **contra** forces in Honduras are based in several areas that border Nicaragua. These areas coincide geographically with refugee camps administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and inhabited by Nicaraguans or Miskito Indians from Nicaragua. Several Peace Delegation members visited one refugee camp near Danli. The male head of one household explained that for two years his family had lived in "the mountains of Honduras" and that they would not return to Nicaragua until the current government is toppled. Nicaraguan refugees were free to come and go from the camp, a situation which contrasted sharply with the closed and fenced-in camps for Salvadoran refugees. According to two Honduran sources who prefer to remain anonymous, these refugees are the social base of the nearby **contra** forces. One of the sources explained that **contra** men visit relatives living in the camp and recruit young men into their ranks under the slogan "One less refugee, one more hand."



Ramon Valladares, Ex-Supreme Court Justice is interviewed by delegate Aris Anagnos.

Desperate Social Conditions

One after another Hondurans described the stark social conditions in their country. The Organization of Women for Peace explained that social and educational programs have been cut to allow for a larger defense budget which compliments adequately the strategic objectives of the United States government in the region. This has impacted the funding for abandoned children and resulted in the closure of orphanages. Children roam the streets and even the very young are being arrested for delinquency. Dr. Almendarez commented that prostitution is becoming commonplace, especially around the U.S. military bases, and is accompanied by sexually transmitted diseases. Crime has increased dramatically according to Mr. Leitzelar, some committed by **contra** forces' members. Eighty-five out of every 100 children and half of all pregnant women are malnourished, consequently 1/6th of all children are retarded. Ms. Luise Druke, Deputy Representative and Interim Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, explained to the Peace Delegation that with international food programs the refugee population receives a complete diet, which contrasts sharply with the level of malnutrition of the majority of Hondurans. She admitted that this situation creates resentment among Hondurans. Dr. Ramon Custodio, President of the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America declared that 57% of Hondurans live in extreme poverty. The Honduran Workers' Confederation estimates that unemployment is at 25% and combined with underemployment, the figure reaches 50%. One member of the Foreign Relations Ministry described Honduras as, "one big refugee camp." Since 1981 there has been an increase in human rights violations. According to the Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers, about 150 labor leaders have been arrested, tortured, assassinated or disappeared.



Family Cabins at United Nations Refugee Camp at Danli.

The Peace Delegation was unable to meet with President Suazo Cordova as he was out of town. The diverse political parties, organizations and individuals that met with the Peace Delegation requested that their message be taken to the people of the United States and its government. They urged for a political solution to achieve peace for the benefit of the people of Central America.

The War In El Salvador

"Constructive Criticism of the Duarte Government . . . Is Interrupted by Government Charges That They Are FMLN Sympathizers."

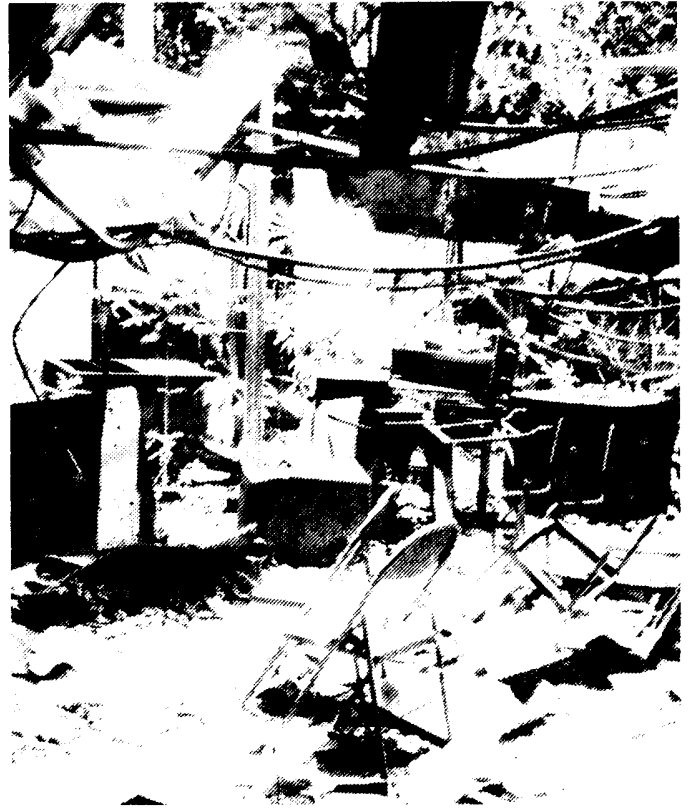
After a series of elections amidst civil war in El Salvador, the Christian Democratic Party and its leader Jose Napoleon Duarte are in power, having won the presidency in 1984 and a majority in the Assembly in 1985.

Duarte had previously won the election in 1972, but the military prevented him from taking office. At that time, Duarte's running mate was Dr. Guillermo Ungo, who is currently the exiled leader of the government's opposition. Duarte was also part of a civilian-military Junta government in 1980-81. During this period alone, over 30,000 Salvadorans were killed by government forces.

Military Occupation of the University of El Salvador

The Peace Delegation was able to inspect some of the pillage and destruction of the University of El Salvador campus carried out in the June 1980 military occupation and described in **A University Survives: A report of a Dutch-University Mission to El Salvador, June 1984**: "During the occupation the 35 buildings of the university were completely stripped of all furnishings, much of which was simply vandalized and left lying. . . . Not only had all the fittings and equipment in all of the laboratories and workshops been destroyed, but the furniture was out of the lecture rooms and either smashed or sold. Window, telephone wiring, electrical wiring and fittings, even sinks and toilets—everything was either destroyed or missing. Some books were left in the central library. Soldiers had defecated on them after knocking over all the shelves. These books and those under them were left alone. Valuable old manuscripts disappeared, reportedly sold to collectors in the United States. The university's buses still stand, but they are wrecks, stripped of any usable parts."

The University returned to function on its campus about a year ago. Even though the yearly budget is 47 million colones (the official exchange rate is 2.50 colones per U.S. dollar), the Rector, Dr. Miguel Angel Parada, indicated to the Peace Delegation that they are still 15 million colones short of budgetary needs. Dr. Parada added that even though President Duarte has enthusiastically verbalized the need for higher education in his country, there has not been sufficient financial support given. Dr. Parada explained that the repairs and the purchases of new equipment and other supplies have been made through the adjusted higher tuition costs which the students have supported and gladly given the University.



Damage to Sociology Department



Rector Dr. Miguel Angel Parada

The War In El Salvador

President Duarte promised during his presidential campaign last year to bring peace to the country, curb human rights abuses and bring criminals to trial, and to favor those sectors of society that pledged their collaboration with his government.

Duarte's electoral victory has restricted the extreme right to the control of the Judiciary and to minority status in the Legislative Assembly. Although the extreme right appears to have been weakened by internal divisions and shifting alliances, it continues to exert significant pressure on government decision-making. The military, strengthened in the course of the war and bolstered by U.S. aid, is able to limit the executive power of the Presidency in order to guarantee the maintenance of the political, economic and social status quo. Duarte's base of support seems to be eroding due to his inability to deliver on his campaign promises, and his growing alignment with the Salvadoran military. The University of El Salvador research project concluded that the Duarte government has not broadened the democratic process which would allow for the political participation of previously excluded groups. Dr. Parada added that to the dismay of the University, the Duarte government had instead leaned more dangerously to the right thereby making it exceedingly difficult for these sectors to have faith in the political process. Dr. Parada also indicated that any constructive criticism of the Duarte government by the University or other organizations "... is interrupted by government charges that they are FMLN sympathizers. This implicitly sanctions government repression."



A Destroyed Lab

Human Rights Violations

A group of 500 northern Morazan residents threatened and forced to abandon their homes and lands by the Army in mid-June, reportedly traveled to San Salvador at the beginning of July to demand their right to live peacefully and to press for a halt to the bombings, captures and harassment by the Army. On July 4, the 500 refugees marched from the Cathedral to the Legislative Assembly to present their demands. The Peace Delegation learned that on their return to Morazan, some of these families had been captured by government security forces and charged with being manipulated by the FMLN into carrying out the protest.

Although the number of reported human rights abuses has somewhat decreased, the brutality has not changed. The Peace Delegation visited two Mothers' Committees* which have been persecuted over the years for their defense of human rights. Their offices in San Salvador were ransacked weeks before the Peace Delegation arrived. They were astounded at President Reagan's partiality on terrorism and morality in the killing of four Marines in San Salvador on June 19. "What about the over 62,000 Salvadorans killed? What about the bombing of civilians?" they asked. According to Dr. Parada, one day before the Peace Delegation visited the University of El Salvador, four tortured bodies were dumped from a moving vehicle in front of one of the campus entrances. Some bodies were still moving, their faces unrecognizable. On July 9, at 6:00 a.m. a Mothers' Committee member was captured by government security forces in civilian dress and taken to a vehicle where she found her son, a First Infantry Brigade soldier, who was also made prisoner. She was told to accompany them for an interrogation. At 11:00 a.m. on the same day, her home was ransacked. She was released on July 10. Her son's whereabouts were still unknown. On July 3, when Peace Delegation members visited the Legal Aid Office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, their staff mentioned that the 10 people waiting in the office were there to report disappearances.

Bombing of Civilians

According to the Mothers' Committees and the Legal Aid Office, international laws are violated when civilians are accused of being sympathizers of the FMLN and treated as if they were FMLN personnel and therefore, legitimate military targets of the Salvadoran Army. Furthermore, a new category of human rights violations, the bombing of civilians, has increased dramatically. The Peace Delegation learned that villagers of northern Morazan were heavily bombed, before the Salvadoran Army moved in on June 14. Residents of Pancho Quemado, Carrizal, Los Patios, El Mono, Sabanetas and Nahuaterique were threatened over the next five days with renewed bombing and accused of being FMLN sympathizers. The Army proceeded to order the destruction of their crops and food, and forced the 2,000 residents to abandon their homes and land. The group's representatives met with the Peace Delegation and pleaded for support for their demands to live peacefully.

* Mothers' Committees for the Political Prisoners, assassinated and disappeared "Oscar Arnolfo Romero" and "Marianella Garcia Villas."

The War In El Salvador



Mothers Committee Member



Demonstration by Mothers Committee

Resurgence of Protests, Demonstrations and Strikes

The overall deteriorating situation in El Salvador has led to the resurgence of protests, demonstrations and strikes. These activities are carried out at great risk. While the Peace Delegation was in El Salvador, paid ads from religious, professional and cooperative organizations outlined their particular demands and urged for social change as well as for the continuation of dialogue towards a negotiated settlement of the war. The Cooperative Associations of Husbandry and Agricultural Production (ACOPAI), supportive of the Duarte government in the past, stated in their paid ad:

"1. In order to solve the grave problems that the country has, we have to make all efforts possible to eradicate the internal causes—the social injustices, the margination and the subjugation that the Salvadoran people have traditionally been victims of—that motivated the frustration of broad sectors of the population. . . .

"2. It is worthwhile to mention that our government and people need the international solidarity in the economic and technological aspects. But this solidarity must be based on the joint effort of all the people of the governments of the world, on mutual respect and reciprocal decency and not be based on use of power over the powerless.

"3. We call upon the government to continue with the efforts to achieve a true national dialogue towards peace and we reiterate our total support to the Church as the mediator in this effort. Only in this way will we be able to overcome the crisis which we are suffering." (In *La Presna Grafica*, July 8, 1985)



Mothers Committee Members

The War In El Salvador

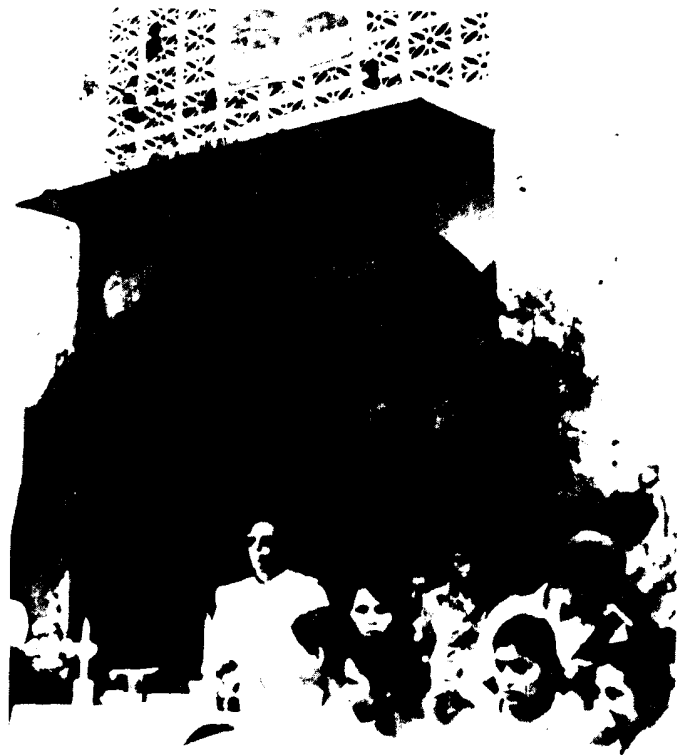


FMLN Commandantes, July 4, 1985, Perquin, Morazan.

Unprecedented Interview With FMLN Commanders

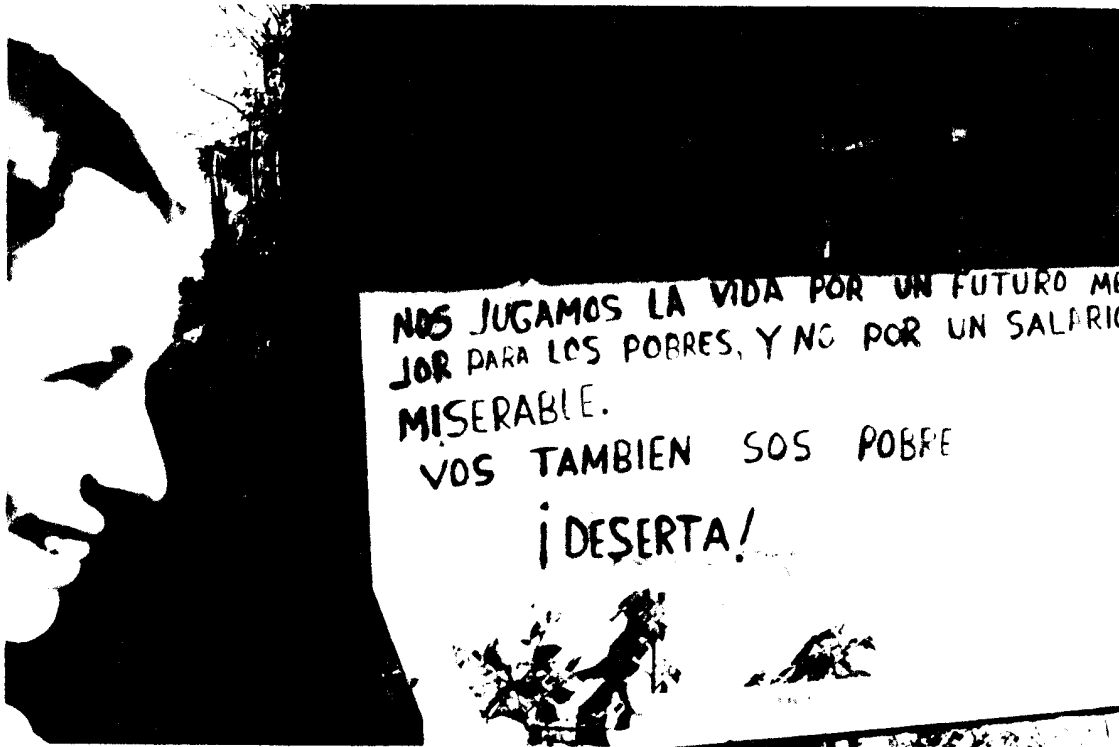
The Peace Delegation, accompanied by members of the international press, had the unprecedented opportunity to interview senior FMLN commanders in an area of Morazan province under the military jurisdiction of the FMLN on July 4 and 5. Before and after the trip, the Peace Delegation attempted unsuccessfully to meet with President Duarte and the Army. General Blandon, the Salvadoran Armed Forces Chief of Staff, proposed a meeting on July 4, that conflicted with previously made arrangements to visit the armed opposition forces in Morazan Province. The purpose of the visit to Morazan, taken at great risk for the Peace Delegation, the press and the FMLN, was to assess the willingness of the FMLN to continue dialogue and negotiations with the Duarte government and to obtain their view of the general situation in El Salvador.

The Peace Delegation was received by about 800 people marching with placards and chanting slogans which voiced their demands to stop the bombing and strafing of their villages, to stop the captures, harassment and forced evacuation of villagers by the Salvadoran Army, and for clinics, medicines and schools. The people, the Peace Delegation and the press gathered in the town square of Perquin to participate in a mass offered by Father Miguel Ventura. In his sermon he told about the abuses that the Morazan residents are subject to by the Army, and reiterated that the Salvadoran people yearn to live in peace and justice. He called upon all the "have faith in the midst of all the trials" and comforted listeners by saying that "God walks on our side."



"Father Miguel Ventura told about the abuses that the Morazan residents are subject to by the Army . . ."

The War In El Salvador



Rebel message to Duarte soldiers, Perquin, El Salvador: "Brother Soldier: We do not receive pay. We do not play with life for a future for the poor, and not for a miserable salary. You, too, are poor. Desert!"



Perquin. Health Clinic destroyed.

The War In El Salvador

How Can You Be Involved In A War and Not Expect Casualties?"

The Peace Delegation held a formal interview with Commanders Jorge Shafik Handal (Salvadoran Communist Party) and Joaquin Villalobos (People's Revolutionary Army), of the General Command of the FMLN, and FMLN Commanders Facundo Guardado (Popular Liberation Forces), Lucio Rivera (Salvadoran Communist Party), Leo Cabral (National Resistance), Miguel Mendoza (Central American Workers Revolutionary Party) and Carlos Argueta and Mercedes del Carmen Letona (People's Revolutionary Army), some of whom participated in the La Palma and Ayagualo peace talks in October and November 1984. Their analysis contained the following relevant points:

1. The FMLN forces are increasingly united and follow common strategy and tactics. Contrary to the opinion that their alliance with the political arm of the opposition—the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR)—is crumbling, the FMLN leaders explained that the nature of the relationship and the heterogeneous composition of the political coalition allowed for a wide range of opinions.

2. The FMLN is in a process of consolidating their strongholds over 1/3 of the national territory, explained Commander Joaquin Villalobos. Their strategy over the next year includes the expansion of their theater of military operations throughout the country and particularly in the urban areas where the government continues to hold control. This expansion, he explained, will be achieved by developing local forces and a support network of sympathizers.



Commandante Shafik with captured U.S. weapon.

3. According to the FMLN, the Duarte government legitimizes and covers up the U.S. counterinsurgency plans which emphasize the military buildup and operations against the FMLN and their social base. Duarte's bold and renewed promises for agrarian reform, economic development and peace are used to weaken support for the opposition forces, and so far, have been empty promises, explained Commander Leo Cabral.

4. Over the last five years the U.S. government has escalated its involvement and support of the war. Therefore, its military personnel stationed in El Salvador faces greater chances of suffering casualties. Commander Shafik Handal illustrated: "The pilot drops bombs during the day, goes home and takes a good shower and then goes out to dinner..." He asked: "How can you be involved in a war and not expect to suffer casualties?" The FMLN considers U.S. military personnel, and specifically the four U.S. Marines killed in San Salvador on June 19, as legitimate military targets. He explained that the Reagan Administration will always find pretexts to define the FMLN as "terrorists". However, if terrorism is defined as "any action that attacks defenseless civilians", then he concluded, by specifically mentioning the bombing of civilians, that the Reagan Administration is responsible for promoting State terrorism in El Salvador. The FMLN commanders agreed that they were determined "to struggle politically and militarily" against the Duarte government, and "if necessary, although we do not want it, against the intervention of U.S. troops. We do not want an intervention . . . neither do we fear it."

5. Commander Facundo Guardado, who had participated in the peace talks in 1984, reiterated the FMLN's sincere interest in continuing the dialogue in order to create basic conditions towards negotiations first, and then to address the need to overcome the internal causes of the conflict in El Salvador. He stated that President Duarte is interested in achieving the surrender of the FMLN and is promoting dialogue in order to guarantee the continuation of U.S. assistance to prop up the deteriorating national crisis. According to the FMLN, the accelerated escalation of the war by the Reagan Administration and the Duarte government signals their unwillingness to reach a political settlement of the war. The FMLN explained that their concrete proposals of date and place to hold a third meeting had not been answered by President Duarte.

6. Commander Joaquin Villalobos presented a comprehensive military analysis to the Peace delegation which focused on the development of the FMLN forces strategy over the 1981-85 period. The number of casualties inflicted to the government forces has been maintained over the 1983-85 period at about 400 per month. According to Commander Villalobos the casualty ratio is 4 Salvadoran soldiers to 1 FMLN combatant.

7. One of the Commanders stated that there are actually 300 U.S. military advisors in El Salvador. However, the vast majority of these are disguised as businessmen and civilian experts.

The Peace Delegation saw U.S. weapons and equipment used by the FMLN forces providing security in Morazan. When Delegation members asked whether they received arms from Nicaragua, they laughed and said there was no need because they can even acquire them by bribing the military, in addition to capturing weapons in operations against the Salvadoran Army.

The War In El Salvador



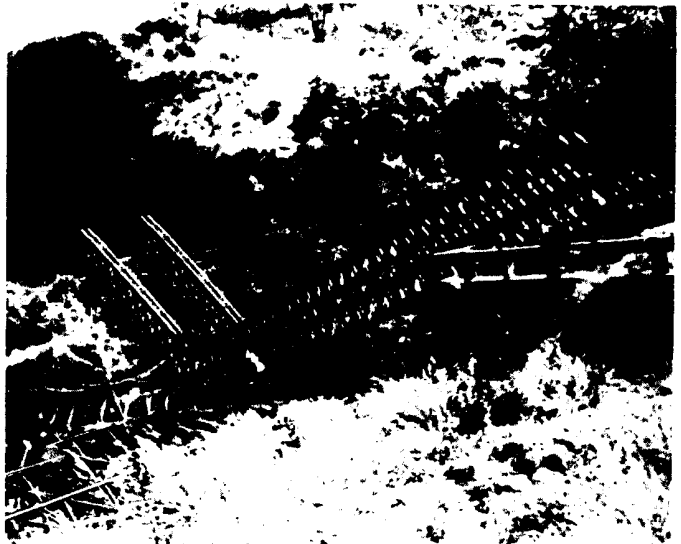
FMLN Guerrillas sing at Mass by Father Miguel Ventura in Perquin, Morazan.



Civilians in Perquin, Morazan told the American delegation that "The bombing causes terror and leads people to leave their home." The people pleaded for the Salvadorean Air Force and President Reagan to stop the bombings.



Women make up at least 30% of the FMLN Guerrillas.



The FMLN blew up the main bridge over the Torola river linking Northern Morazan to the rest of El Salvador.

The War In El Salvador

Civilian Air War Casualties

The Peace Delegation visited the nearby town of San Fernando, totally destroyed and inhospitable after several bombings and Army sweeps last year. The Delegation members listened to the testimony of a woman who lost her granddaughter when a bomb fell on her home.

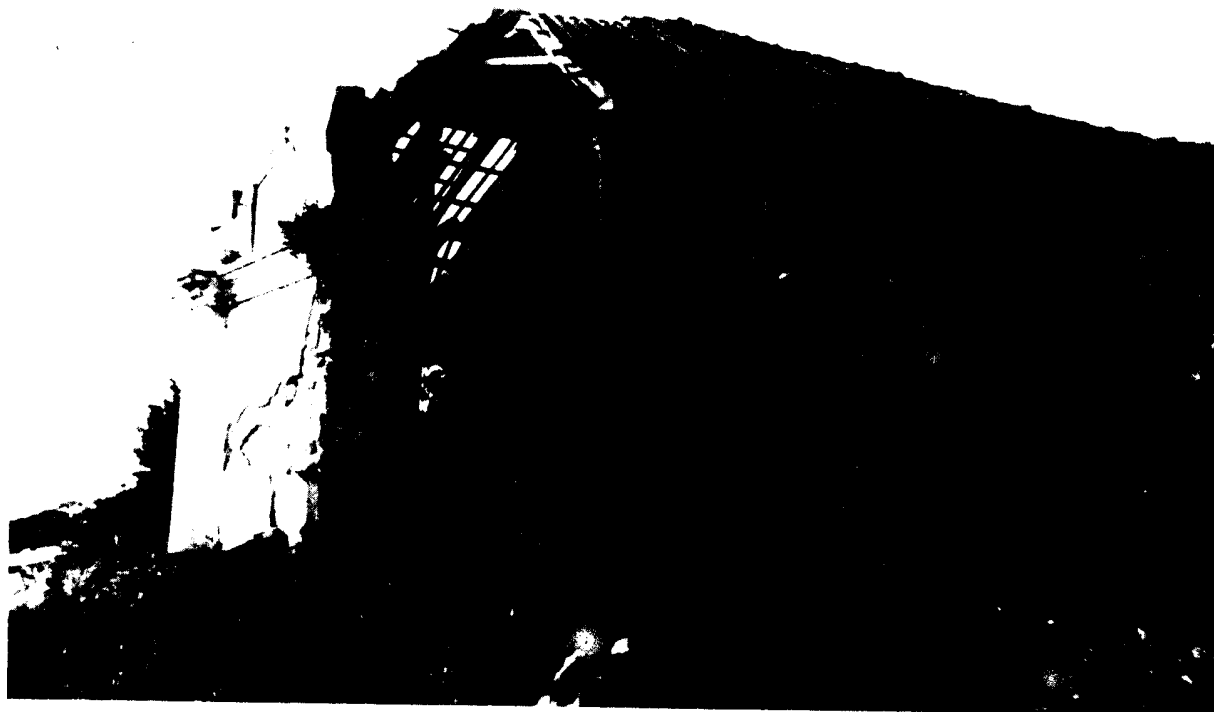
Peace Delegation members were appalled by the poverty, squalor and despondency of the la Cruz refugee camp outside San Salvador, inhabited by about 2,000 refugees. The part-time teachers explained that learning was hampered by the war psychosis that most children suffered and by the limited resources derived from budget cuts in education.

In El Salvador, the official unemployment and underemployment rate is estimated at 60%. Consumer buying power has diminished 54% over the last five years, whereas most salaries have remained frozen since December 1980. About 50% of the national budget is dedicated to the war effort. (*Christian Science Monitor*, July 1, 1985).

The Peace Delegation visit to El Salvador demonstrated the urgency of stopping the escalation of the war and of continuing the dialogue process initiated in October 1984.



Two women who provided testimony to international press and delegation of bombings of San Fernando by Duarte Air Force.



Church destroyed by Duarte Air Force 1985, San Fernando in Morazan province.

The War Against Nicaragua

“Nicaragua Does Not Need An Intervention From the United States, the Soviet Union, Cuba, or Any Other Country, Nicaragua Alone Can Resolve Its Own Problems.”

Cardinal Obando Y Bravo

As early as February 1982, Nicaragua began to address concerns raised by the Reagan Administration. Under Mexico's auspices, Nicaragua offered to sign non-aggression pacts with its neighbors to guarantee a policy of non-alignment, a mixed economy and political pluralism. Throughout 1982, Nicaragua repeatedly urged the U.S. to name a negotiating team and to set a date for a meeting. The Reagan Administration responded that the Contadora regional peace initiative was the proper forum to discuss these issues, not bilateral talks. In late 1983, Nicaragua submitted several draft treaty proposals to the Contadora group. These proposals included mutual non-aggression pacts among Central American nations, provisions prohibiting foreign military bases and Salvadoran opposition facilities in Nicaragua, provisions for on-site inspection and penalties in case of violations, an arms freeze, armed forces limitation, and measures for implementing “democratic, representative and pluralistic systems” in the region.

Nicaragua's Concessions

Since November 1983 Nicaragua began to implement some measures independently. It sent home Cuban advisers and Salvadoran opposition leaders, opened up dialogue with the opposition, moved the elections to an earlier date and relaxed censorship. The Peace Delegation saw an array of slogans painted on the walls of Managua and Leon by the opposition parties as well as opposition bill boards dotting the highways. Nicaragua also passed an amnesty program which has become increasingly popular with the Miskito Indians and according to Ms. Druke, Deputy Representative and Interim Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Tegucigalpa, to a lesser extent with Nicaraguans in refugee camps in Honduras. She explained to the Peace Delegation that those who wish to avail themselves of the amnesty program have to do so confidentially with UNHCR staff, since they are subjected to threats from refugees who oppose the Nicaraguan government. Another Honduran source who works in the area where Nicaraguan Miskito Indians are settled in the Moskitia added that most of them would avail themselves of the amnesty and that they are kept misinformed, are abused and forced into fighting by the **contras**. One hundred refugees have returned this year, representing a 100% increase over last year, according to Ms. Druke. There are currently about 600-700 who have expressed their desire to be repatriated. Ms. Druke confirmed that the Miskito Indians are safe upon their return to Nicaragua.



Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega with Delegate Members Dr. Armando Navarro, Samuel Maestas, and Dr. Jess Nieto.

Manzanillo Talks

During the summer of 1984, Nicaragua began bilateral talks with the Reagan Administration in Manzanillo, Mexico. According to President Ortega, the talks were to get Nicaragua to sign the final Contadora treaty, which Nicaragua agreed to do in September 1984. In January 1985 the Reagan Administration broke off the Manzanillo talks. In February 1985, Nicaragua once again unilaterally implemented particular components of the Contadora draft agreement by returning 100 Cuban advisers to Cuba and freezing military acquisitions. President Ortega reiterated Nicaragua's willingness to resume the Manzanillo talks with the U.S., the government support for the Contadora process and Nicaragua's unilateral moratorium on importing new military systems.

Despite Nicaragua's efforts, the Reagan Administration has continued its pressures and accusations, “distorting information” and making unlikely progress towards peace according to Commander Omar Cabezas from the Interior Ministry.

The War Against Nicaragua

The Contra War "Is A War Imposed on Us."

The Reagan Administration has secured Congressional approval for financial assistance to the **contra** forces, whose objective is the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government, and has imposed an economic embargo through an executive order. According to Mexico's Foreign Relations Minister, these measures contribute to harden political positions and make even more difficult the search for a peaceful solution in the region.

The Peace Delegation witnessed the economic hardships and the effect that **contra** attacks and the imminent threat of a U.S. invasion have on Nicaraguans. The Peace Delegation considers that the main concern of Nicaraguans is to be able to have peaceful conditions to promote economic development. They do not want war with neighboring countries, they cannot afford to wage war, they do not have "expansionist" sentiments as claimed by the Reagan Administration. The majority of Nicaraguans would agree with Commander Tomas Borge, Interior Minister, that the "contra" war "is a war imposed on us." Nicaraguans do not recognize the **contra** forces as part of the legitimate opposition in their country, stating that their creation and development has been financed and directed by the Reagan Administration.



Approximately 15,000 Nicaraguans enthusiastically celebrated the 6th anniversary of the liberation of Leon with the American delegation.

Patriots or Terrorists?

The **contra** war has diverted scarce national resources towards the military effort to isolate **contra** forces inside Nicaragua and push them back into Honduras and Costa Rica. President Ortega explained to the Peace Delegation that the remaining **contra** forces are engaged in terrorist activities such as the July assault and setting afire of a civilian passenger ship in Bluefields where four persons died aboard. President Ortega also told the Peace Delegation that **contra** forces were concentrating in Honduras in order to launch an attack on July 19 - the sixth anniversary of the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship--into Nueva Segovia and Zelaya provinces.

Nicaraguans are engaged directly and actively in the war effort. At a rally in Leon celebrating the sixth anniversary of the liberation of the city from the Somoza regime, approximately 15,000 Nicaraguans enthusiastically chanted and sang patriotic slogans for national unity and sovereignty against the **contra** war and an imminent U.S. invasion. The Peace Delegation met wounded soldiers and local troops, including a women's battalion, returning from the war front in northwestern Nicaragua. The over all morale of the people and troops was very high.



The Delegation met wounded Nicaraguan soldiers at the Leon celebration.

The War Against Nicaragua



Women's Brigade in Leon

A Fast For Peace

President Ortega explained to the Peace Delegation that the economic embargo imposed by the Reagan Administration in May 1985 is an attempt to complement the **contra** pressure in achieving the overthrow of the government. President Ortega assured that it would not be achievable since Nicaraguans are united in support of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation. The Peace Delegation witnessed the determination of the Nicaraguans to defend their national unity and sovereignty. At the same time, they are eager to search for all legitimate avenues to achieve peace. To implement such an effort, Father Miguel D'Escoto requested a leave of absence from his position as Foreign Relations Minister in order to begin "a fast for peace and against terrorism" of the Reagan Administration against Nicaragua, as a new form of Christian struggle for peace. President Ortega offered to establish a demilitarized border area with Costa Rica, and did not preclude a similar agreement with Honduras.

President Ortega indicated to the Peace Delegation Nicaragua's friendly sentiment towards the American people. He stated that Nicaragua is an open country and invited Americans to visit. Nicaraguans make a point of separating the Reagan Administration and the American people. The Peace Delegation read in the July 4 *New York Times* that an estimated 100,000 Americans have visited Nicaragua since 1979 without incident, according to Nicaragua's Foreign Trade Minister.

"... How To Get Out and When To Do It."

President Ortega presented two options available to the Reagan Administration: negotiations or direct intervention. He concluded that the threat of U.S. invasion is more real now than ever, and recalled that U.S. filibuster William Walker made himself President of Nicaragua in the 1850s and that under pretexts U.S. Marines invaded and occupied Nicaragua on two occasions this century. The problem for the Reagan Administration, he said, is "not how to come in, but how to get out and when to do it." As the majority of Central Americans whom the Peace Delegation met, President Ortega emphasized that any U.S. direct intervention in Central America would erase the nation's borders and escalate into a regional conflagration with very high costs and an unpredictable outcome.

The War Against Nicaragua



Minister of the Interior and only surviving founding member of Sandinistas, Tomas Borge, (center) in Leon.



Tomas Borge consoles the young daughter of a Sandinista soldier killed by the Contras.



President Daniel Ortega and the omni-present image of Augusto Sandino.

Conclusions

The Peace Delegation presents in this report a discussion that supports the following findings:

1. The Delegation sounds the alarm about what it perceives as the headlong rush by the Administration into direct military involvement in Central America. In spite of the disclaimers issued by our Government, the constant threats and inflammatory language used against Nicaragua, the intensive military buildup in Honduras and El Salvador, and the resumption of aid to the Contras, point in the other direction. The intensive militarization of Honduras and the effort to militarize Costa Rica create ample opportunity for a real, accidental or staged, incident, which would provide the justification for military intervention. The human and material costs of such an eventuality for Americans and Central Americans leads us to conclude that all possible efforts should be invested to find a political solution to achieve peace before it is too late. There is no time to lose. We must prevent a disaster of the magnitude of the Vietnam War from re-occurring in Central America.

2. The nature of the conflicts in Central America are not related to the confrontation of Eastern and Western political ideologies nor to Soviet or Cuban attempts to expand their influence. They are related to the poverty and misery, underdevelopment and dependency, century-old stagnant social structures, unresponsive political systems, and the subjection of the national sovereignty of Central American countries to the United States objectives in the hemisphere.

3. There is universal yearning for peace in the area. The delegation found no support for U.S. military intervention from any part of the political spectrum. No amount of repression or bombing of populations will solve the problems. It may at best suppress or postpone the day of reckoning. Only an improvement in the standard of living of the people concerned through economic and not military aid will abate these conflicts and the turmoil.

4. This situation has led a broad spectrum of people in El Salvador and Nicaragua, and in a very incipient form, segments of the Honduran society, to struggle for the defense of their national sovereignty and interests. These efforts to institute responsive economic, social and political policies, far from threatening the long-term interests of the United States government and people, are geared to guarantee stability and peace in the region. However, the situation also demands an evaluation and change in United States foreign policy towards Central America.

5. All viewpoints from extreme right to extreme left concur that a U.S. military intervention would immediately regionalize the conflict. Borders would be eliminated and a vast military field of operations would be created that would extend from the Mexican border to Panama and in which large U.S. forces would bog down. Such an intervention would force the revolutionary movements in Central America to merge in opposition and engulf countries like Honduras and Costa Rica, which have not had major internal strife. Salvadoran President Duarte has already proposed to regionalize the conflict by offering an alliance with Honduras against Nicaragua. The most likely ultimate result after many U.S. and Central American lives are lost and enormous suffering and devastation is inflicted would be irreparable damage to U.S. Latin American

relations with the eventual consolidation of regimes hostile to U.S. interests.

6. The Delegation found unanimous opposition to "terrorism." The difficulty is in the definition of terrorism, which is described differently by various victims of violence. Our Administration defines terrorism as violent opposition to its policies. The Mothers of the Disappeared in San Salvador define terrorism as the actions of the security forces of the Salvadoran Government and the death squads, which had resulted in the deaths of over 62,000 people; the campesinos in the areas controlled by the FMLN define terrorism as the daily bombings and strafing of the government planes and helicopters; the Honduran civilians define terrorism as the arrest, torture and disappearance of Honduran labor leaders; the Nicaraguan civilians define terrorism as the attacks by the Contras, such as the recent destruction of a civilian ferryboat in the Bluefields area and the tactics described in a manual distributed by the CIA. Since violence breeds violence and terrorism, it is obvious that all violence in the area must cease, including the violence committed by the forces supported by the Reagan Administration.

7. The accelerated introduction of U.S. military hardware, personnel, and infrastructure over the last four years has contributed to the escalation of the levels of confrontation in Central America armed conflicts. At the same time U.S. intervention in the region has created an awareness and sensitivity to national sovereignty in all segments and political forces in each Central American country visited by the Peace Delegation.

8. The climate for peaceful solutions in Central America is fragile at best. The pressure for the continuation of dialogue in El Salvador, the willingness of the Nicaraguan government to resume the Manzanillo talks, and the overwhelming support for the Contadora process are hopeful signs. These legitimate peace initiatives can advance only if the Reagan Administration abandons its objectives of overthrowing the Nicaraguan government, militarily defeating the Salvadoran opposition forces, and militarizing Honduras and Costa Rica.

9. A generally acceptable solution is the one proposed by the Contadora Countries, which provides for gradual de-escalation of the conflicts and the demilitarization of the area. The Contadora proposals are particularly appreciated as an effort by Latin American leaders to solve their own problems and not as the imposition of a solution from the outside. While our Government officials supports Contadora negotiations, only Nicaragua has accepted the proposals. U.S. allies, Honduras, El Salvador and Costa Rica, offer objections which they would not be likely to offer without the encouragement of the Reagan Administration.

10. **If our country is to be dragged into a major conflict in Central America, it should only be done after free and open debate and the full consent of the American people and their representatives in Congress. It should not be done by Government deception, misinformation or secret activities which violate U.S. and international law.** We should never forget the secret bombing of Cambodia and the other illegalities committed by the Nixon Administration, which led to Richard Nixon leaving office under the threat of impeachment.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the Delegation for Peace in Central America makes the following recommendations:

1. The Reagan Administration should take concrete steps to promote and support the Contadora draft agreement, the dialogue process in El Salvador and the U.S.-Nicaragua Manzanillo talks.

2. The United States government should de-escalate its military involvement in Central America as a good faith effort to contribute to a climate towards peace in the region. Specifically, the United States should conform to the following points as called for by the Contadora Act of September 7, 1984.

a) Cease the assistance and support of the contra forces in Central America. (Contadora Act, Section 5, 6 & 7).

b) Halt the military assistance to the Duarte government and press to stop the bombing of civilians in El Salvador, shifting emphasis to negotiations and national reconciliation. (Contadora Act, Section 2).

c) Cancel U.S. military exercises and surveillance flights over Central America. (Contador Act, Sections 2 & 4).

d) Freeze the introduction of military hardware and personnel in Central America. (Contadora Act, Sections 2 & 4).

e) Begin a process of dismantling the military bases in Honduras and withdrawing U.S. troops from the region. (Contadora Act, Section 3).

3. U.S. Congress should strike the conditional amendments attached to the Foley-Conte amendment and support the original language of the amendment. According to the June 28, 1985 *Los Angeles Times*, Foley's original amendment prohibited the commitment of U.S. forces except in the event of a declared war, a hostile attack on the U.S., its embassies or citizens, or circumstances of mutual defense; as called for in the so-called Rio Treaty adopted in 1947 by the United States and most Latin American nations.

The Peace delegation wishes to thank the numerous individuals, organizations and institutions that provided their generous hospitality and assistance to make its mission effective.

(The Delegation intended to include Costa Rica in its itinerary, due to the initiation of U.S. military assistance to this country that had abolished its Army in 1949, but lack of time and scheduling difficulties did not make this possible.)



A Nicaraguan youngster stands in front of a sign in the city of Leon which reads, "With one fist, we will defeat the aggressor," a reflection of widespread fears of a U.S. invasion to topple the Marxist-oriented Sandinista government.

Letter To The American People

Note On Letter:

While in Morazan, El Salvador, the U.S. delegation was asked by the FMLN to deliver its' message for peace to the American people, the international press, and the U.S. Congress.

This letter was delivered to select members of the U.S. Congress and U.S. Senate by delegates Aris Anagnos, Carolyn Anagnos, and Dr. Jesus G. Nieto who subsequently presented the letter to the American and international press at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on July 30, 1985.

July, 1985

Morazan, El Salvador

Dear

Interference by the Administration of President Ronald Reagan in the internal affairs of El Salvador has already reached the level of direct intervention in the armed conflict. The involvement of United States war materiel, military advisers and economic resources in this conflict is approaching the level of an undeclared war by the Reagan Administration.

This involvement takes concrete forms. For example:

- a) Development and coordination of counterinsurgency plans;
- b) Training of government armed forces both inside and outside El Salvador;
- c) Supplying arms, ammunition, aircraft and artillery;
- d) A large number of military advisers, who already represent a very high percentage of the army's officer corps and who have *de facto* taken on the tactical and strategic direction of the Salvadoran Armed Forces;
- e) The presence of U.S. advisers in or over areas of conflict. For example:
 - Major Queen in Operation Roblar I, Guazapa, June 1985;
 - Colonel James Steel in Operation Torola IV, Morazan, October 1984;
 - Proven participation of a U.S. adviser in an operation of troop transportation by helicopter, in which Commander Nidia Diaz of the FMLN was captured (San Vicente, April 1985);
 - The recovery of a helicopter downed in combat (Morazan, June 1985), using a "Chinook" U.S. Army helicopter flown by U.S. military personnel out of their military base in Palmerola, Honduras.

The growing intervention by the U.S. Administration is clearly an act of aggression. It has brought all manner of tragic consequences, not only due to the air war, but also because of the direct involvement of the U.S. advisers in this war which has taken the lives of more than 50,000 civilians and produced more than one million refugees and displaced persons (1/3 of the total population). This constitutes a high level of destruction of the country and its resources.

It is evident that nothing has been capable of stopping the FMLN. U.S. intervention in El Salvador has only increased the suffering of our people and the destruction of our country.

In order to maintain this level of intervention, President Reagan has distorted the truth to Congress and the American people, promoting a false image of the Duarte government.

- In El Salvador, true agrarian reform does not exist. The little that was accomplished is now paralyzed and corrupted. Duarte's agrarian policies have brought about bankruptcy and indebtedness among rural farmers. Phase II of the agrarian reform was never implemented, and the basic structure of economic power has remained intact.

- The government is promoting economic policies which only favor the dominant sectors, thereby subjecting the working majority of the people to the stifling effects of spiraling inflation, wage freezes, unemployment and economic chaos.

- There is corruption at all levels. The investment of millions of U.S. dollars has heightened the contrasts of social inequality. Corruption among high army officers and government officials is uncontrollable. The corruption is similar to that which existed among the local allies of the United States during the Vietnam war.

- The judicial system is inoperative and corrupt. Not one political crime (murder of Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero, U.S. agrarian reform advisers, etc.), or mass crime (massacres at El Mozote, Las Hoja, etc.) has been solved. There are hundreds of political prisoners, and thousands of "disappearances" and political assassinations take place with impunity.

- There is systematic repression against grassroots organizations: arrests and assassinations of trade unionists, workers and students; military blockades of workplaces; terror against the rural population, and so forth.

- The Duarte government lacks popular support. There are growing signs of popular discontent (demonstrations, strikes).

- Grassroots sectors and organizations, who supposedly made up the social base of the Duarte program, stand today in open opposition to the government. The recent electoral victory of Duarte's party proves nothing in El Salvador. Colonels Sanchez Hernandez and Molina, as well as General Romero, also reached the presidency by way of supposedly democratic elections, and yet brought bloodshed and war to our country.

Furthermore, no election authorizes anyone to bomb and displace unarmed civilians as Duarte authorizes daily. It is timely to remember that Mr. Ngo Dinh Diem became president of South Vietnam without any popular support, and the results are well-known.

Injustice and popular discontent will persist as long as these conditions persist, and the war will continue to be fueled by the very causes which gave rise to it.

With regard to the military situation, it can be proven that reality stands in stark contrast to the analysis and projections of the Administration.

In a short time, the war will have spread to the entire national territory. This runs contrary to the strategic plans of the U.S. advisers who are attempting to confine the war to one or two separate areas within El Salvador.

Letter To The American People

- The number of casualties among the ranks of the government army is growing daily in the course of their patrols and operations planned by the U.S. advisers. The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador is well aware that the casualty figures listed by General Vides Casanova in his monthly report to the Legislative Assembly (July 1985) are manipulated and falsified.

- The air war is a crime against the civilian population, yet ineffective against our military forces.

The FMLN is able to render inoperative any economic or political program imposed behind the backs of the majority. Duarte's army is unable to thwart our policy of eroding the economic, political and military base of the government.

We are prepared to wage a long war of attrition, even against an eventual intervention by foreign troops.

President Reagan has lied repeatedly in his attempts to place the issue of U.S. intervention in El Salvador within the context of an East-West confrontation. This is absurd. An analysis of El Salvador's geographic situation will demonstrate that it is impossible to sustain the FMLN from other countries. The United States has taken control of both oceans (Pacific and Atlantic); it has military bases and military control of all land borders. In order to be sustained by foreign logistical support for the Duarte government, the FMLN would require such quantities of boats, airplanes and trucks that it would be impossible to hide them.

Our forces and our resources come from inside the country; they are based on popular support. The origins of the conflict lie in the deep and intolerable inequality and social injustice, and the suppression of civil and human rights of the Salvadoran people.

In this context of social injustice, repression and intervention, Jose Napoleon Duarte is trying to use dialogue as a political component of the military plan drawn up by the U.S. advisers, and not as a true alternative for a negotiated political solution to the conflict.

This reasoning attempts to achieve at the negotiating table the goal which has not been achieved on the battlefield. They are using dialogue to attempt to force us to surrender, although they are unable to win the war nor take away our weapons in combat.

For Duarte, the dialogue process is but an instrument to achieve bipartisan consensus in the U.S. Congress in order to maintain U.S. economic and military aid, thereby prolonging the war in the search for an illusory and impossible military victory. He expressed this very clearly in his speech to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (June 1985).

It is within this context that we must understand the present controversy regarding the continuation of the dialogue process: the issue is will it take place secretly and in another country, or publicly inside the country.

The first option signifies that dialogue would be utilized to win approval of U.S. aid, which would mean the prolongation and deepening of the war. Secret talks would eliminate public pressures to carry out the agreements reached, thus allowing Duarte to maintain the false image of a negotiator before the American people and Congress. If the dialogue is

conducted openly, commitments and conclusions must be agreed upon in full sight of the Salvadoran people and international public opinion.

Confronted with these alternatives, Duarte has interrupted the dialogue process.

There are clearly two possible courses of action:

a) An end to intervention in El Salvador by the U.S. Administration and the initiation of a process leading to a negotiated political settlement.

b) A continuation of the policy of aggression and intervention against our people and the unleashing of a greater war: a regionalization of the conflict, dragging the youth of El Salvador, the United States and of other countries into a holocaust without any true and objective perspective of military victory for the United States.

You know as well as we do that a war of this type is not won on the basis of arms superiority, but rather on the basis of popular support. There is no doubt that intervention by U.S. troops in our country would deepen the nationalist character of this war of the entire people in defense of their lives and their sovereignty.

In an attempt to justify the U.S. role in El Salvador to the American people, the Reagan administration has come up with a supposed third alternative which lacks any true basis: to obtain our surrender through threats, pressures and more intervention. This vision is unreal. Our confrontation with intervention strengthens our love for our homeland, as well as our principles and our nationalism. We will never surrender. This third alternative will merely serve as an excuse for future escalations of intervention.

We would like to express to you, members of the Congress of the United States of America, and to the American people as a whole, that there are historical and geographic links that unite us, which can contribute to progress, brotherhood and mutual cooperation and respect. We would like to maintain and strengthen these ties, but it must be understood that today we are exercising our irrevocable right to legitimate self-defense against aggression by the administration of President Reagan.

We therefore propose that Congress, as a contribution toward peace, take steps and present initiatives which will allow for an end to the process of intervention in El Salvador. Only in this way can a just and lasting solution be achieved, one which will allow us to exercise our right to self-determination and which will free the American people from another tragic war.

We are convinced that the U.S. Congress can initiate this process toward peace with the same authority that it exercises today in supplying the military aid which maintains, prolongs and aggravates the war. It is well-known that he who can decide to wage war can decide to make peace.

FMLN GENERAL COMMAND:

Jorge Schafik Handal

Fernan Cienfuegos

Joaquin Villalobos

Roberto Roca

Leonel Gonzalez

Interview With Commandante Joaquin Villalobos

Summary of Statements Made at a Press Conference Held in Perquin, El Salvador by Members of the General Command and the Political Commission of the FMLN

Present:

Members of the General Command:

Commander Joaquin Villalobos

Commander Jorge Shafick Handall

Members of the Political Commission:

Leo Cabral, National Resistance

Miguel Mendoza, Central American Workers Party

Facundo Guardado, Popular Liberation Forces

ON THE MILITARY SITUATION

Question: Commander Villalobos, there is a great deal of talk among the Salvadoran army that they are optimistic regarding a victory against the FMLN; that you are dispersed; that you are suffering defeats; that the FMLN is being dismantled. What is the actual situation of the war?

Answer: First, we are going to try to give a synthesis of the developments of the war during the last five years, so that we can arrive at the present situation and explain, in summary, what our present strategic plan is and what the present plan of the Christian Democrats is, with the support and advise and direct management of the present U.S. Administration.

In 1980, the perspectives of a victory were based on the development of a mass insurrection and at that time the FMLN had minimal military force and did not rely on large qualitative capacity. The mass movement was confronted by the politics of the destruction of the popular base of the FMLN, both in the country and in the cities. The first target was in the cities. The press is aware of this process of extermination of the popular movement in the cities. This happened during 1979-80.

From 1981-1982 the process of extermination is transferred to the rural areas, since their position was that the cities had been pacified. This process left 50,000 people dead, of which most of them were civilians. Most of these people were from the general population, some organized, but a large percentage of civilians, who were not a belligerent part in the conflict.

As a result of this policy of the extermination of our base, we were forced to put a great deal of energy into self-defense. During 1981-1982 we called this process the plan of resistance. In an effort to destroy our forces in order to stop the insurrectional process, the armed forces were weakened, they suffered a great deal of casualties. In his presidential report in 1981 or 1982, Duarte stated that the armed forces suffered over 1,000 casualties. At that time 1,000 casualties was an immense loss. The army had no more than 15,000-17,000 troops.

This happened in 1981, it is evident that we were able to defeat this phase in which they intended to destroy us. What this phase brought was the extermination of large sectors of the civilian population with massacres, such as, El Mozote, the Sumpul River where 600, 700, 1,000 peasants were killed. During this period we developed and strengthened our military forces, during the first phase we resisted and by 1982 our forces began to consolidate and develop a counter offensive force.

During this period the military plan of the enemy was based on keeping hundreds of posts in the areas of conflict, such as, northern part of Morazan, Chalatenango, Cabanas, Guazapa, Tres Calles, Jucuran. They kept guard from high strategic positions and stationary posts with the intent of stopping our process of expansion, although their main objective was to destroy the FMLN's base of support. Once completing the extermination of the revolutionary process, they would begin the process of democratization. (This is related to the political aspect of the plan, but we are addressing the military situation). Their plan to destroy us was defeated. By 1982, we had taken the offensive and started to destroy their posts left inside our rearguard. There with the support of the people, we were able to destroy dozens of posts, one by one, by sections and companies. This phase lasted from 1982-84 and left the FMLN with a great deal of territory. This territory included not only small areas of land, but also the east, northeastern areas until the Pan-American Highway, leaving the Salvadoran army to a reduced number of posts. The same occurred in Chalatenango.

Of course, there were Fronts that only maintained their position, such as the Cerro de Guazapa, and did not expand. This was due to a more complicated situation. This front is adjacent to a vital area of the enemy. When the process of expansion was initiated in Guazapa, we had initiated the counter-offensive strategy in Tres Calles, the zone adjacent to Rio Lempa in the central part of Usulután. This phase ended with very favorable results: we caused 15,000 casualties to the army, we captured 2,000 prisoners, we took 5,000 arms and more than 1 million cartridges. We also captured important people like the Vice Minister of Defense. Throughout this phase, the FMLN carried out uninterrupted offensives, reaching new areas. These areas were not limited to only the north or isolated parts of the vital zones, but to more populated areas. Areas where the population has higher levels of cultural and political awareness. As such, the FMLN in this period, entered into a discussion about the most effective approach in order to advance militarily.

The military advances made by the FMLN forced the army to make changes in their general plan. In order to slow down the destruction of their positions, they moved to a second line and established a plan based on mobile troops in order to avoid being targets of the FMLN. This is strictly a defensive plan, that is, the army was more concerned about their men, than the political-judicial and economic structures. Obviously as they moved from their positions, we developed new methods and areas of operation in the southeastern part of the territory and were able to reach the Pan-American Highway and the central zone. We were able to successfully carry out sabotage actions since the army could no longer defend the area.

So their plan changed from stationary forces maintained inside the territory to mobile troops which patrolled and carried out offensive actions, thus avoiding being stationary targets. Given these changes, we developed a change in the mode of

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tactical operations --- the bases of which were the following --- we believed that if it wasn't for the level of U.S. intervention we would have won the war by now. The army had around 13,000 troops and 30 aircraft, now it has around 42,000 and about 50 aircraft. We have caused them about 18,000 casualties, that is we have destroyed the army which they started the war with, we have taken between one-fourth and one-third of the territory. In zones such as the eastern part of the country, for example, the municipalities in which the army defends its political-judicial structures of local power are only 20 out of 86. This means that the armed forces are a mobile force which is more concerned with their own security than with the security of their political and economic projects. We could say that their intent is to wage an irregular war against us.

The difference in the conception of an irregular war for them is that they have the responsibility with respect to their economic and political project. They have a lot to protect whereas, we do not have to protect an economic project as such, not even the territory. For us the territory is a theatre of operations, a front or a rearguard. With the process of intervention, we could not continue with a view of an immediate definition of the war, an uninterrupted offensive toward reaching the cities. This was an error, we could not adopt such strategy given the unlimited material resources of the enemy. Our strategy had to be defined in terms of weakening and defeating their resistance and the will of the Reagan Administration to continue to supply the Salvadoran Army. If we can defeat this factor, we will win the war.

In that sense, for us the fundamental thing was to develop a war of attrition which results in some changes in the perception of the development of the war and have produced this feeling of success from the armed forces.

In the last phase, the perception of the war, at the publicity level with respect to the advances made by the FMLN was, we could say, very strong because we destroyed and took over posts, took prisoners, etc. Under the conception of a war of attrition, this year it has become clearer. The war is cumulative and the problem is who is able to confuse and wearout (wear-down) the other side.

We have developed lines to guarantee a process of creating the conditions for what we call a counter offensive strategy geared to defeat the Reagan Administration's willingness to continue to supply and support the Salvadoran Army. We adopted several areas --- the human element in the military aspect is one. Here our fundamental objective is to wear down the existing military forces. Each time they carry out an offensive, we launched an offensive designed to wear down and bleed each one of those units. This was based on tactics that would allow us to cause the maximum casualties with a minimum of casualties to our units. We have succeeded in these efforts. Since July of last year, we have maintained a high level of casualties against the Salvadoran Army and we have significantly reduced our losses. The Reagan Administration can send all the weapons they want, but they cannot substitute the casualties suffered by the armed forces and cannot solve the morale problem.

We adopted another area --- with the retreat of the armed forces, they left large areas unattended and vulnerable to political-military destabilization. The army, as I was saying, is practically unable to defend the political economic infrastructure and, therefore, tries to defend it with political arguments. Everybody knows that in any war, the economy is a military target. So, we put forward a plan geared to prevent that the economic aid of which 85% is allocated to counter-insurgency plans is not favorably implemented by the Duarte government.

We also adopted the political destabilization of the Duarte government. The issue of the mayors and its relationship of the political power to the military power is related to this. The army has in reality lost military control in approximately 35% of the municipalities and local governments within the country. It is not that we are permanently there, but they no longer have the control, therefore, the government lost its judiciary power (based on local judges), lost the civil defense, the municipal governments, information networks and political parties. All this disappeared so the question is, on what logic and on what grounds do they pretend to continue to have political power, if they do not have military power?

In addition, the local power is part of the counter-insurgency plan put forward by the North Americans. It is a fundamental component of their plan to create a civil defense as part of their military plan against us. It is on this basis that we launched our campaign against the government's local powers (i.e., the mayors).

We are at war, we are two belligerent forces; what political rights do they allow us as FMLN in the capital so that we would allow them political presence where they no longer control militarily?

The other element is that of expansion, not of transferring (of leaving our zones to go to another area) that is to take the war to the entire country. This was a decision made based on the need to prepare ourselves for a possible intervention. The administration planned to push us, with the participation of Honduras, to two areas close to their (Honduras) border. But we have taken the war to the entire country and to all the highways. We have kept our strongholds throughout the zones of what we call our strategic rearguard.

This process required a readjustment in order to confront the level of intervention. We had to reorganize our units and structure in addition to the unification of the military strategy of the FMLN. This has taken some time. This happened around September 1983, they did the same thing. They used this to say that we had lost the war.

With all the changes we have made, taking into consideration that our objective is not to conquer territory, but rather to expand and integrate and organize the people and establish local forces, such as in the eastern part of the territory. The statements they have made about the sabotage, the effects on the transportation system, the dismantling of local governments, the casualties incurred and the operations in the eastern territory are elements that prove that the FMLN plans are being effective and that we have the offensive in the military arena.

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ON THE POLITICAL SOLUTION

Question: Some of our delegation and 2 North American Congressmen met with the Archbishop. One of the Congressmen asked how the negotiations were going. The Archbishop expressed his opinion, saying that the guerrillas want a peaceful solution and want negotiations but now they don't show much interest in these negotiations. Is there any reason why the Archbishop should have such an opinion?

Answer: Well, here it depends on the willingness of 2 parties. We say to you quite frankly our willingness is to find a political solution and, if it is necessary, to enter now in new conversations. Now in La Palma there were three fundamental agreements regarding dialogue: it should take place in front of the people, inside the country and with the participation, or rather allowing the participation of the different popular sectors. This is spite that we are convinced that the conversations helped Duarte to go to the Congress and different sectors in the U.S. and say "look I'm talking, give me more money, more planes, more helicopters." We could repeat also the same argument that he has said, that is "it is a tactical dialogue." But we share the opinion of the people, because we are a part of the people, that the majority of the people want a political solution. In this sense, from our point of view, we have not diminished our interests to continue with the talks. However, we don't see a corresponding attitude nor a realistic attitude from the other party. Naturally, we have said before that there are interests behind all of this that don't want a political solution to the conflict and in fact are heightening the crisis, not only in El Salvador but in Central America, by increasing the war and this you know very well.

Question: Comandante, what specifically can be done to influence the dialogue process between you and Duarte, what steps can be taken?

Answer: Well, inside the country, we consider basic that the distinct sectors, the social political and economic forces, be permitted to freely express their opinion regarding a political solution, regarding dialogue. In this sense we have presented initiatives and that there be some type of meeting of all of these groups and forces in order to discuss, that is, to have an active participation of the different sectors. In regard to the U.S., we could say it is necessary that the sectors opposed to the intervention speak out in favor of a political solution.

Question: What are the state of the negotiations at this moment?

Answer: We have publically expressed that the government of Duarte through concrete actions has basically ruptured the dialogue. Our 3 proposals which I have referred to have not received a positive response. Duarte continues to talk in public about dialogue and that he is for dialogue, that he is for the humanization of the war but this is no more than rhetoric for political purposes, demagogic purposes, that don't relate to a real desire to advance in the process we started. In the recent days there hasn't been a single contact. For our part, as I said in the beginning, we have the will to continue the talks, not only in the general but in the concrete.

OTHER QUESTIONS

Question: The Reagan Administration argues that you are Marxist-Leninist, that Marxism is cruel. This argument is used for public propaganda. In other words, Comandante, how much influence does Fidel Castro have here?

Answer: Societies, social models, social thoughts influence everybody, not only us. Even the government has such influences, so that is not the problem. We are an authentically independent movement. We make our own decisions based of course, on a correlation of the world. The problem is that the present U.S. government does not understand that it has to take into consideration other ideas, other social models and other forms of thought in Latin America. They must seriously consider in this country, where land is the fundamental means of production, if Duarte's capitalist model is capable of solving the social problems. That is, if we are not right in presenting a model of deeper social changes. That is the issue and not if it will or will not resemble the Soviet, the Nicaraguan or Fidel Castro's model. Of course, among revolutionaries we are in solidarity, but we are totally independent.

Question: How would you describe your ideological position?

Answer: More than ideological, the definition should be a scientific one. We aim for a solution to the country's social and economic problems. We believe the country has been living in the framework of dependent capitalism which has exacerbated our country's problems. If this model had been successful, there would be no war. The fact that there is a war, sustained by popular roots, shows clearly that this model is no solution. So we have to find another model.

Some of us believe the final direction will be to a socialist society, but this is not an immediate issue. We foresee that a next stage would include a series of political, economic and social transformation which are not precisely those of a socialist society, but which go in that direction.

The government of the U.S. is trying to impose on us, not only a domination, but a system as well. It would have us accept that all the social-economic problems be solved within a more modern stage in the development of dependent capitalism. That in its essence, is the Kissinger Plan.

Question: What would happen if the U.S. got out of Central America?

Answer: First, there would be no more war. In El Salvador, what is first needed to achieve peace, is the end to U.S. intervention. Without it, the war would have ended a long time ago, either by military means or through negotiations.

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The other thing is that the dynamic of Central America's historical process, would find its own way. This would not mean a total exit of the U.S. In other words, it does not mean a void in the presence of the U.S. because the U.S. is here — in the continent. There exists an economic relationship which is not only unavoidable but which we don't want to avoid either. There exists a cultural relationship, etc. The U.S. out of Central America means an end to its military intervention, its political interference, its imposition of the historical path of Central America.

U.S. public opinion should think about this. In the coming years, what is going on in Central America will be happening throughout Latin America. What is going to happen in the Southern Cone? There is already an explosive situation developing there. In Chile there is an armed struggle — it's a powder keg and the explosion is going to be much stronger than here. What formula should prevail in the U.S.? Should it be allowed that wherever there is a fire, troops and planes be sent? If so, in ten years, the U.S. will be fighting all over Latin America. Does it have the strength? We believe not.

This also has to do with the argument that the Central American struggles represent a threat to the U.S. Peoples are forced to arm themselves as a legitimate defense when they are threatened. If there is not an interventionist threat against a newly born revolution, against a new process, of course our people have no interest in arming themselves. When the social-economic problems are so serious that it is impossible to channel human and economic resources there is no choice but to arm oneself.

Neither does anyone have expansionist interests. Our interest is to solve our national problems. We consider the argument that we represent a threat ridiculous. From no point of view can our movement, our liberated people, be a threat to the United States.



FMLN-FDR Commanders Jorge Shafik (left), Joaquin Villalobo (center), and Facundo Guardado (right).

Delegation For Peace In Central America Members

DELEGATION FOR PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA MEMBERS

(Listed in alphabetical order)

Mr. Aris Anagnos

Past President of the Southern California American Civil Liberties Union affiliate. Member of the National Board of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Member of the House of Representatives Speakers' Club. President of Real Estate Dynamics Inc. in Los Angeles, California.

Mrs. Carolyn Anagnos

Referee of the California State Bar Court. Member of the National Board of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Member of the California State Democratic Central Committee.

Ms. Sandra Gladstone

Member of Southern California Americans for Democratic Action. Former member of the California State Democratic Central Committee. Former labor union organizer.

Mr. Samuel Maestas Executive director of El Progreso del Desierto Family Health Center in Coachella, California.

Dr. Armando Navarro

President of the Congress of United Communities. Director of the Institute for Social Justice. Member of the California State Democratic Central Committee. Professor of Political Science at Pomona College and at the California State University in Northridge.

Dr. Jesus Nieto

President of the Bakersfield chapter of the Congress of United Communities. Businessman from Bakersfield, California.

Dr. Raul Ruiz

Director of Chicano Studies Department at the California State University in Northridge. Co-Chair of the Committee for Community Action.

Mr. Eli Sandoval

California State Chairman of the American G.I. Forum.

Ms. Callie Wight

Coordinator of CARINO, a mental health group for Central American refugees in Los Angeles, California. Ph.D. candidate in Clinical Psychology.

RESOURCE STAFF

Ms. Margarita Studemeister, Central American specialist.

DELEGATION FOR PEACE IN CENTRAL AMERICA MEETINGS AND CONVERSATIONS

In Mexico:

Mr. Bernardo Sepulveda Amor, Foreign Relations Minister
Mr. Salvador Samayoa, Political-Diplomatic Commission of the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation and the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FMLN-FDR)
U.S. Ambassador John Gavin

In Honduras:

Dr. Ramon Villeda and Mr. Leo Valladares, Foreign Relations Ministry
Ms. Luise Druke, Deputy Representative and Interim Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

National Party

Christian Democratic Party

Bu-Giron Movement of the Liberal Party

Liberal Democratic Revolutionary Movement of the Liberal Party

People's Liberal Alliance of the Liberal Party

Innovation and Unity Party

Liberal Unity Front

Unitary Federation of Honduran Workers

Honduran Workers Confederation

Federation of Transportation Labor Unions

National Association of Honduran Peasants

Honduran Federation of Women's Associations

Organization of Women for Peace

Dr. Ramon Custodio Lopez, President, Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America

Mr. Ramon Valladares, Supreme Court

People to People

Youth organization representatives and independent Hondurans

Spanish Ambassador Fernando Gonzalez Camino

U.S. Embassy reception

Visit to a refugee camp near Danli under the auspices of the UNHCR

In El Salvador:

Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas

Legal Aid Office of the Archdiocese of San Salvador

Mothers' Committees for the Political Prisoners, Assassinated and Disappeared "Oscar Arnulfo Romero" and "Marianella Garcia Villas"

Dr. Miguel Angel Parada, Rector, Dr. Mauricio Guevara Pacheco, Vice-Rector, Ms. Ana Gloria Castaneda, Mr. Jesus Marquez Ochoa, Dean of Agronomy, University of El Salvador

U.S. Embassy officials

Commanders Jorge Shafik Handal (Salvadoran Communist Party) and Joaquin Villalobos (People's Revolutionary Army), members of the General Command of the Farabundo Marti Front for National Liberation (FMLN)

Commander Facundo Guardado, Popular Liberation Forces (FPL)

Commander Lucio Rivera, Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS)

Commander Leo Cabral, National Resistance (RN)

Commander Miguel Mendoza, Central American Workers Revolutionary Party (PRTC)

Commanders Carlos Argueta and Mercedes del Carmen Letona, People's Revolutionary Army (ERP)

Residents of northern Morazan province

Visit to Perquin and San Fernando, Morazan province

Visit to La Cruz refugee camp

In Nicaragua:

President Daniel Ortega

Commander Tomas Borge, Interior Minister

Mr. Jose Leon Talavera Salinas, Vice-Minister of Foreign Relations

Commander Omar Cabezas, Ministry of the Interior

Ms. Nora Astorga, Ministry of Foreign Relations

In Cuba:

President Fidel Castro

Mr. Jose Fernando Alvarea, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers

Mr. Ramon Castro, Director of the Picadura Valley Plan