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Central America: The Next Phase

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dictates in Central America has been astonishing, and in Latin America generally, there are signs of independence — the major reason why the USG so bitterly opposed the Contadora agreements, the International Verification Commission, indeed the involvement of any elements not under adequate control.

While these are significant factors, in the short run they might still be overcome, leading to a renewal of congressionally-mandated violence. The hawks can take the high moral ground, espousing “freedom” and “democracy.” The official doves, who do not question the basic doctrines of the Office of Public Diplomacy, can only counter that they agree, but are unwilling to pay the costs, a weak position when it comes to the crunch. Deeper tendencies run in a different direction, but it is far from clear that they will be manifested in time to save the people of Central America from further terror and misery at our hands.

Setting the Stage

By a slim majority, the House on February 3 rejected a Reagan administration request to renew US government (USG) aid to the proxy army. CIA supply flights into Nicaragua are to continue through February, probably at peak intensity, while the illegal surveillance flights are subject to no limits. Contra supporters and fund-raisers (Robert Dole, General John Singlaub, etc.) announced that they would renew their efforts, reporting that they were “swamped by offers of money and support” after the congressional vote.¹ The private and clandestine networks may be reactivated, to be exposed years hence with appropriate laments.

The Reagan administration had prepared for the contingency. After the August 7 accords were signed, CIA flights increased to 2–3 a day to provide a reserve stock of arms and supplies. In November, John Negroponte was appointed Deputy National Security Advisor. Closely associated with Honduran General Alvarez, who presided over mounting state terror as the US role deepened, Negroponte was the proconsul for Honduras from 1981–85, charged with converting Honduras into a base for the US attack against Nicaragua and organizing the proxy army.² With this appointment, the administration signalled its intent to return to clandestine war if necessary; Congress and the media were silent.

On February 4, a headline in the Managua newspaper *El Nuevo Diario* read: “Peace gains points.” The headline is accurate, as was the headline in the Sandinista press stating that “the U.S. Administration Will Evaluate New Forms of Aggression Today.” Leaders of the pro-contra internal opposition in Managua deplored the congressional vote as a “Sandinista victory.”³

¹ AP, Feb. 5, 1988; Pamela Constable, BG, Feb. 7, 1988.

² COHA News and Analysis, Dec. 16, 1987.

³ AP, Feb. 4, 1988.

In Zeta, January, I reviewed the steps taken by the USG through the first phase of the accords (August-November) to ensure their collapse. The first category was military, including rapid escalation of the supply and surveillance flights required to keep the US proxy forces in the field and to provide them with up-to-the minute intelligence so that they can avoid military combat and attack “soft targets” such as agricultural cooperatives. The goals were to refute the charge of the doves that the resort to violence “is a clear failure” and should be replaced by other measures to “enforce” a desired “regional arrangement” upon Nicaragua, and Nicaragua alone (Tom Wicker)⁴; to compel Nicaragua to keep up its guard so that the media could then denounce Sandinista totalitarianism; and to ensure the contras sufficient supplies to continue the war in the event of a ban on official aid. One measure of these successes is that contra forces, according to Western military observers, are able to continue fighting for perhaps a year even without new aid.⁵ Another is given by a Witness for Peace study, which passed virtually without notice, concluding that “Contra rebels have doubled their attacks on civilians” since August 1987, with 90 attacks on civilians as compared with 41 cases of “Contra ambushes, murders, attacks on farm cooperatives and kidnappings between January and July of last year,” citing figures and noting that this “provides but a glimpse of the terror unleashed on the civilian population in recent months.”⁶ The press did report that at least 25 more civilians were killed by the contras as the House voted.⁷

The second category of USG initiatives, ideological warfare at home, included efforts to refashion the accords to fit the USG agenda, a task assigned to the Free Press. Particularly notable during the period reviewed was the evasion of the severe vi-

⁴ NYT, March 14, 1986.

⁵ AP, Feb. 4, 1988.

⁶ AP, Jan. 29, 1988.

⁷ Philip Bennett, BG, Feb. 7, 1988.

After the House vote, James LeMoyne summarized what had been achieved (Feb. 7). There is a “deeper problem” of facing the needed social changes in the region, a task to which we are now dedicated having recognized the earlier error of our ways — the familiar “change of course.” But that apart, “the main problem remains Nicaragua’s Sandinista Government” and the prospects that it may “not comply with the peace treaty,” which now gives “the last chance for moderating the course of the Nicaraguan revolution.” Everyone else now having performed admirably, that is where the problem lies, exactly as the Office of Public Diplomacy demands.

It nevertheless remains true that “Peace gains points.” There are long-term factors that are pressing USG policy towards the position of the doves, as revealed by the survey of elite opinion cited earlier. In the coming years, it will be necessary to pay the costs of Reaganite follies. His economic managers did succeed in transferring resources from the poor to the rich and organizing a vast public subsidy to high-technology industry with its state-protected market (the Pentagon system). But their methods of Keynesian state management created huge debts and trade deficits while increasing consumption by the wealthy and financial manipulation but not productive investment, and in general left a shambles that will require a degree of austerity for less-privileged sectors of the population. A concomitant effect is that it will not be easy to terrify the population with demons to induce them to tighten their belts even further as the state subsidizes the rich and undertakes violence and subversion abroad. We already see the signs. Suddenly, the Russians are less threatening and international terrorism is less of a threat. The statesmanlike approach is now mandatory, with summitry and arms negotiations. The doves are in the ascendance, not primarily because the world is all that different, but because domestic constraints have changed. Furthermore, popular dissidence is a growing force, imposing costs that state planners cannot overlook. The courage of people resisting US

to ensure that the accords would be dismantled. It succeeded. By mid-January, the Verification Commission was abolished, and Ortega was compelled to go far beyond the accords, abandoning the simultaneity condition on which they were based. The “genius of the Arias plan,” the Times editors now explain (Jan. 31), “is that it provides a means for Nicaragua to accommodate to neighbors without appearing to truckle to Washington,” not the simultaneity requirement that had been so highly touted as the “genius” of the plan before the demolition job took effect. Recognizing that the powerful make the rules, Ortega agreed that Nicaragua alone would enact the provisions of the accords, even calling for an international commission to monitor Nicaragua’s adherence alone.⁴⁰ Headlines everywhere reported that Ortega now promises to “comply with” the accords — that is, the version fashioned in Washington, which bears little resemblance to the text — while warning that his promises plainly cannot be trusted. No one else’s promises are relevant, now that the accords have been consigned to oblivion. So powerful was the propaganda campaign that even critics were swept up in it. Thus a Nation editorial (Jan. 30) stated that Ortega “has made significant concessions to the Central American peace plan,” namely, by agreeing to abandon it in conformity to USG orders. The US clients are now exempt, and with no further international monitoring, the USG is free to act as it wishes, subject to the controls of Congress and the Free Press, which have demonstrated their hawk-eyed vigilance so impressively in the past years.

The success in undermining the accords and shaping them into an instrument of US policy are not a novel Free Press achievement. The media contribution to undermining the Paris Peace agreement of January 1973 is perhaps an even more startling example, as documented elsewhere.

⁴⁰ LeMoyné, NYT, Jan. 24, 1988.

olations of the accords by the US client states, and more crucially, the virtual suppression of the rapid increase in supply flights that undermined what the accords identify as the single “indispensable element” for peace, namely an end to any form of support for “irregular forces [the contras] or insurrectionist movements [indigenous guerrillas].”

There are two major reasons why these facts had to be suppressed: first, they demonstrate that the US bears primary responsibility for sabotaging the accords; second, they undermine the pretense of “symmetry” between El Salvador and Nicaragua that is a staple of USG propaganda, constantly relayed by the media. The careful reader could finally learn that CIA flights had increased so substantially since August that the contras are “burying the equipment in their areas of operation enabling them to fight even if US military air drops cease.” This November 24 report merited notice in the Washington Post on a back page, but the facts apparently do not suggest that the USG may be undermining the accords, or raise questions about the relation between these determined sabotage efforts and the Nicaraguan emergency regulations while the country is under foreign attack. Few, however, would be aware that the International Commission of Verification (CIVS) established under the accords concluded that amnesty need not be decreed until the aggression ceases, and even a real media addict would not have learned last November that the Nicaraguan National Assembly decreed a complete amnesty and revoked the state of emergency, both laws to “go into effect on the date that the [CIVS certifies] compliance with” the commitments of the accords to terminate the attack against Nicaragua — laws formulated in terms of the simultaneity condition of the accords.⁸ Thus by November,

⁸ Amnesty Law and bill to suspend the State of Emergency, promulgated in November 1987, Unofficial Translation, Nicaraguan Foreign Ministry.

Nicaragua had largely complied with the accords as they are actually written, and remains alone in this regard apart from Costa Rica.

The US military attack against Nicaragua will no doubt continue, along with other measures to restore Nicaragua to the “Central American mode” and to compel it to adhere to “regional standards” as demanded by Washington Post editors and other doves. Ideological warfare will enter a new phase. In the past, the task of the Free Press was to demonize the Sandinistas while extolling the terror states established and supported by the USG; to suppress Nicaragua’s efforts to maintain a neutralist posture and the USG commitment to force it to become a Soviet client by barring aid from elsewhere and economic relations with the US, on which all of Central America relies; and to entrench the doctrine that the USG is seeking to establish democracy in Central America as it acted to destroy any possibility of meaningful democracy and social reform. This duty was performed with discipline and success. During the period of the demolition of the accords (August 1987-January 1988), the primary task was to focus them on Nicaragua so that the US clients can violate their terms with impunity, to suppress the US actions to undermine the accords, and to eliminate any verification apparatus so that these actions can continue. This goal too was achieved, a major USG victory.

In the coming months, the task is to deflect attention from the USG and its clients while depicting every effort by Nicaragua to survive the continuing US attack as a violation of Ortega’s promises, proving that Communists cannot be trusted and preparing the ground for further steps to enforce “regional standards” in Central America. Thus if the USG directs the contra civilian front to block a cease-fire, that will prove that Ortega is uncompromising; the continued refusal of El Salvador and Guatemala to negotiate with authentic

Kinzer’s companion article denounces Ortega for numerous sins, e.g., running fraudulent elections (a staple of USG propaganda, hence a fact, whatever the facts³⁹), as usual citing opposition figures but also, for balance, one “old friend” of Ortega’s who is permitted to say that Ortega has “regressed” and no longer reads writers and philosophers — as distinct from Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, ever immersed in the works of Heidegger and Wittgenstein. This exhausts the coverage of the problems of peace in the region.

Those intrigued by the rhetoric of propaganda will note a standard device used by Kinzer; in column after column, critics of the Sandinistas are cited (opposition figures, vendors, workers, etc.), and for balance, the words of government figures. Supporters of the government, who must exist somewhere, are notable by their absence; favored states are naturally treated quite differently. The intended effect is to create the image of a conflict between an embattled population and a tyrannical government, on the model of the people versus Somoza. The outright propaganda journal *La Prensa* pursues the same technique, but lacks the near monopoly over the national media required under “democracy.”

There is no space to review here the remarkable campaign conducted by the media, most notably the *New York Times*,

³⁹ To prove the point, Kinzer states that “the Sandinistas controlled the electoral machinery and the opposition was splintered.” The first point was investigated in detail by the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) delegation that observed the elections. Their conclusion was that the elections were remarkably fair, and that “Generally speaking, in this campaign the FSLN did little more to take advantage of its incumbency than incumbent parties everywhere (including the United States) routinely do, and considerably *less* than ruling parties in other Latin American countries traditionally do (The Electoral Process in Nicaragua, LASA, Nov. 19, 1984). The LASA report, like other observers reports, has been under a media ban, because of its conclusions. As for the fact that US-backed business-based parties have no conception of democratic politics and could not organize a popular constituency, it is not obvious that this is a proof of Sandinista iniquity.

asking whether Ortega can be trusted. Nowhere is there a word referring to the actions of the USG to undermine the accords, and questions concerning the two US-backed terror states and its client state of Honduras arise only peripherally, in conformity to USG priorities.

LeMoyne gives an account of Arias intended to be laudatory, but in fact depicting him as an opportunist and moral monster who is unconcerned over terror in El Salvador and Guatemala, the horrible conditions that persist in Honduras, the fact that all three states are effectively under military rule backed by the US, or the terrorism of the US proxy army attacking Nicaragua. Rather, in this account, Arias's prime concern is that the contras are a "military Edsel," a failure, so that other methods must be found to pressure the Sandinistas "to moderate their revolutionary project"; but we must bear in mind that we are hearing Arias through a particular ideological filter. LeMoyne refers to Jose Figueres Ferrer — "the man who is widely considered the father of Costa Rican democracy" — but does not tell us, nor would he or his colleagues ever tell us, what Figueres has to say about the Sandinistas: namely, that "for the first time, Nicaragua has a government that cares for its people," that he found "a surprising amount of support for the government" on a recent visit, that theirs is "an invaded country" and that the United States should allow the Sandinistas "to finish what they started in peace; they deserve it."³⁸ Such comments lack ideological serviceability, as does Figueres's statement that he "understands why" La Prensa was closed, having censored the press himself when Costa Rica was under attack by Somoza. Hence Central America's leading democratic figure must be censored out of the media, though his name can still be invoked for the anti-Sandinista crusade.

³⁸ See my *Culture of Terrorism* (South End, 1988), citing an interview published by COHA, Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Oct. 1, 1986.

guerrillas will continue to pass without notice.⁹ If Nicaragua attempts to prevent its information system from being taken over by the US and its local clients, that will be offered as proof of their iniquity by state ideologists in the media who pretend not to understand the meaning of a "free market" operating under vast disproportion of resources. And the same will be true of measures to sustain the economy that has been destroyed by US violence and economic warfare, or indeed any measures that differentiate Nicaragua from some Scandinavian democracy in times of peace. Nicaragua has been unable to adopt measures standard in democratic states in times of crisis. I doubt that there is a historical precedent for the phenomenon of La Prensa, a disinformation journal subsidized by the superpower attacking Nicaragua and openly supporting this attack. Its editor, Jaime Chamorro, publicly called for contra aid in the US press in 1986. In a December 1987 interview with Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a member of the CIA-run "civilian directorate" of the contras, he is identified as "the co-director of La Prensa who chose to fight outside the country against the Sandinista dictatorship." In a November interview, the Conservative Party leader interpreted the Sandinista agreement to negotiate with the contras through Cardinal Obando as a "recognition of their legitimacy," which makes the contras a "legitimate part of the Nicaraguan community with all rights" so that the internal opposition can openly identify with them. In a follow-up interview, contra leader Adolfo Calero lauds this explicit association with the contras, as the journal does regularly, a position further endorsed by other members of the internal opposition that functions openly in Nicaragua, supporting the US terrorist

⁹ "According to [FDR leader Guillermo] Ungo, talks have not resumed, despite FMLN requests, because of pressure exerted on Duarte by the Reagan administration as well as from the country's security forces" (COHA News and Analysis, Jan. 14, 1988). New FMLN proposals were briefly noted by the Boston Globe, Feb. 9, 1988.

attack. There are many similar examples. The record of the US and its clients under far less onerous conditions teaches us a good deal about the conditions that are imposed by the powerful, necessarily accepted by the weak.

One qualification. According to State Department doctrine, as a result of the failure to provide official aid to the Freedom Fighters, “the top priority issue” for the US clients will “shift from democratic development to renewed fear of security,” with “resurgence of the military” now “inevitable” and a likelihood of coups and repression (Elliott Abrams), a warning reiterated by General Fred Woerner of the Southern Command after the House vote and a virtual authorization for increased terror.¹⁰ If state terror can be blamed on “communist subversion” originating from Nicaragua (Abrams), constraints on media coverage of the client regimes might relax.

Off the Agenda

The most important diplomatic event of January 1988 was the report of the International Commission (CIVS) charged with monitoring compliance with the accords. It singled out the USG for condemnation because of its continued assistance “to the irregular forces operating against the government of Nicaragua,” thus violating “an indispensable requirement for the success of the peace efforts and of this Procedure as a whole.” A CIVS official informed the press that Latin American representatives were “shocked by the attitudes of patent fear” expressed by trade unionists and opposition figures in El Salvador and Guatemala, adding that the CIVS could not provide details about compliance because of objections from Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala — indicating what the report would have said, had it not been blocked by the US

¹⁰ AP, Feb. 7, 1988, recalling an Abrams speech of April 1987; Richard Halloran, NYT, Feb. 7, 1988.

World Court. Later George Volsky added (Jan. 20) that the provision of the accords calling “for all countries to deny the use of their territories to insurgents in neighboring nations...applies mainly to Nicaragua, which is said to be helping rebels in El Salvador, and to Honduras, whose territory is reportedly an important part of the United States-directed contra supply effort.” Surely a balanced and judicious summary of the available evidence. And LeMoyne warns (Feb. 7) that if in the future “the Sandinistas [are] found still to be aiding Salvadoran guerrillas” (as they are now, according to doctrinal Truth), then the peace accords will collapse; no other similar problem is noted.

It is pointless to comment that it would be entirely proper to provide assistance to people seeking to defend themselves from a foreign-installed terrorist army, a conception that is so far from intelligible here (in the case of our clients, that is) that we need not tarry over it.

The reaction of the doves to the Miranda public relations coup is instructive. With rare exceptions, they did not respond by saying that Nicaragua has every right to arm its population in defense against a possible US invasion and to obtain means to defend its national territory. Rather, they argued that Miranda may be unreliable, that the Sandinista plans are only a “wish list,” etc., conceding that the revelations were devastating. These reactions reflect the shared consensus that no country has the right to defend itself against US attack.

The Peace Accords: In Memoriam

Ideological warfare heated up in the following weeks, as the accords approached their mid-January “deadline.” On January 10, the New York Times Magazine published its comprehensive review of the state of affairs, running two articles, one by James LeMoyne on the conflict between Arias and his adversary Daniel Ortega, the other by Stephen Kinzer

opportunity since to correct this “imprecise” report, and they have used it, namely, to repeat the charges that they privately acknowledge to be without merit. LeMoyne does this regularly, either explicitly as in the cases mentioned, or implicitly in his constant reference to the “symmetry” between El Salvador and Nicaragua — indeed, the fact that Nicaragua is “far more militarized than neighboring El Salvador, a country also at war,” a statement that would embarrass a moderately serious journalist.³⁵ LeMoyne, who describes himself as occupying the middle ground between “ideologues of left and right,”³⁶ is not alone in maintaining the fiction of “symmetry.” Thus in the midst of the Miranda farce, Stephen Engelberg wrote in the Times that “although no firm evidence was ever unveiled” to show that Nicaragua was supplying the rebels from 1981 to 1984, “a range of intelligence officials said the circumstantial case for Nicaraguan involvement was overwhelming,” an argument that “appears to have been confirmed” by Miranda, who “said the Sandinistas were shipping the weapons to El Salvador by sea.”³⁷ That is, they are shipping weapons via the Gulf of Fonseca, which is 30 km wide, heavily patrolled by US naval vessels and SEAL teams and covered by a radar facility on Tiger Island in the Gulf, able to locate and track boats not only in that area but far beyond, as discussed in World Court testimony by David MacMichael, the CIA analyst responsible for analyzing the relevant material during the period to which Engelberg refers. Despite these extensive efforts, no evidence could be produced, though Nicaragua, curiously, has no difficulty providing evidence of CIA supplies in the supposedly “symmetrical” situation. It was, in fact, precisely these charges, presented by the State Department and now relayed by Times ideologues as “news,” that were reviewed and dismissed by the

³⁵ NYT, Dec. 29, 1987.

³⁶ Dec. 20, 1987.

³⁷ Dec. 18, 1987.

and its clients (Peter Ford, *Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 15, 1988). These conclusions are obviously useless for ideological warfare. Correspondingly, James LeMoyne of the *New York Times*, in a report focusing on denunciations of Nicaragua, dismissed the CIVS report in one sentence, stating only that its meeting ended “with little agreement” (the report was adopted unanimously). The condemnation of the US was briefly noted in an article on another topic 9 days later by his colleague Stephen Kinzer, who explained that “the commission fell out of favor in some circles when it reported that Nicaragua had taken ‘concrete steps toward the beginning of a democratic process.’” He noted further that President Duarte “suggested that news reports would be enough to determine which nations were complying,” reflecting his insight into the Free Press. The Commission was disbanded under US pressure as too sympathetic to Nicaragua, granting to the US the privilege of pursuing its terrorist exercises unhampered and permitting Duarte to continue to serve as a front man and apologist for terror and murder.

In the US client states, the terror and repression that escalated during the first phase of the accords (see Zeta, January) continued through the final demolition. A few examples will illustrate.

On the day of the House vote, judicial authorities in El Salvador confirmed the discovery of the bodies of two men and a teen-age boy at a well-known dumping ground for the death squads associated with the security forces. They informed the press that the three bodies were found blindfolded with hands tied behind their backs and signs of torture. The nongovernmental Human Rights Commission (CDHES), which continues to function despite the assassination of its founders and directors, reported that 13 bodies had been found in the preceding two weeks, most showing signs of torture typical of the death squads. Seven bullet-ridden bodies were found on January 17 on a ranch, including two women “who had been

hanged from a tree by their hair”; “their breasts were cut off and their faces painted red,” a CDHES spokesman reported, on condition of anonymity for fear of the death squads. The bodies of three tortured men were found on January 25. The spokesman added that the murders were “committed according to the *modus operandi* of death squads and demonstrate that these actions perpetrated by security forces and armed forces are continuing.” This information, reported by AP, is available to readers of Canada’s leading journal (Toronto Globe & Mail, Feb. 3), but there is no word in the New York Times or Washington Post.¹¹

In late December, the auxiliary Archbishop of San Salvador said in a homily that some means must be found “to stop these death squads, which are crouching in the darkness ready to pounce and ready to return to the abuses of past years.”¹² In a televised mass on January 3, Archbishop Rivera y Damas once again denounced “the practice of torture used against many Salvadorans by the death squads.” He stated that bishops in several provinces reported increased death squad murders and called for an end to assassinations and torture.¹³ Little of this is noted in the media, and none of it in the New York Times, which also does not report that leading Church figures who have fled from El Salvador (including a close associate of the assassinated Archbishop Romero), well-known Salvadoran writers, and others who are by no stretch of the imagination “political activists,” and who are well-known to Times correspondents, still cannot return to the death squad “democracy” they applaud, for fear of assassination. On the contrary, James LeMoyné perceives greater freedom in El Salvador than in Nicaragua, where the pro-contra internal opposition

¹¹ AP, Feb. 2, 3; Globe & Mail, Feb. 3, 1988.

¹² AP, Feb. 3, 1988.

¹³ UPI, BG, Jan. 4, 1985, 90 words; COHA Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Jan. 20, 1988.

in that they all face “externally backed guerrilla war.” This is a central element of Washington propaganda, so it is the duty of the Free Press to insist upon the claim, however absurd the comparison may be. Since LeMoyné cannot conjure up KGB supply flights at the level of 2–3 a day into El Salvador to keep the guerrillas in the field, not to speak of the other elements of the “low intensity conflict,” he has to do the best he can; hence his grasping at the straw of Defense Minister Ortega’s comments, reconstructed in the required fashion while the unwanted facts are marginalized or suppressed.

LeMoyné has made a noble effort to establish the “symmetry” required for doctrinal reasons. In August 1987, he reported that though rebels in El Salvador deny receiving support from Nicaragua, “ample evidence shows it exists, and it is questionable how long they could survive without it.”³³ Thus they are much like the contras, who, as regularly conceded, “would have difficulty surviving” without the massive CIA airlift (NYT military correspondent Bernard Trainor, Jan. 27, 1988), and could not attack “soft targets” without the extraordinary intelligence and communication apparatus provided by their foreign master. LeMoyné presented no evidence, then or ever, and has yet to comment on the fact that State Department efforts to substantiate these claims are derisory (and were dismissed as such by the World Court); but it is required for propaganda, so therefore it is a fact.

Times efforts to protect this required fact are intriguing. After LeMoyné’s statement appeared, the media monitoring organization FAIR wrote a letter to the Times asking them to share LeMoyné’s “ample evidence” with its readers. Their letter was not published, but they did receive a response from foreign editor Joseph Lelyveld acknowledging that LeMoyné had been “imprecise.”³⁴ LeMoyné, and the Times, have had ample

³³ NYT, Aug. 13, 1987.

³⁴ Extra!, Oct.-Nov. 1987.

Nicaragua. In fact, Nicaragua has made it clear, repeatedly, that it would be happy to obtain French Mirage jets, but this fact cannot be reported because it would give the game away, and would undermine the ominous references to the “Soviet-supplied Sandinistas” that are necessary to keep the domestic US population in line.

The logic of the US response is clear: Nicaragua has no right of self-defense. It is intolerable, tantamount to aggression, for Nicaragua to interfere with US violence and terror by arming its population in self-defense or attempting to defend its airspace. This doctrine of the elite consensus is, again, highly revealing, as is the fact that its meaning cannot be perceived.

It is interesting that in the midst of the furor over Sandinista plans to obtain means to defend themselves, the US began shipping advanced F-5 jet planes to Honduras on Dec. 15,³¹ unreported by the New York Times apart from subsequent reference in quotes from Ortega and Arias buried in articles on other matters.³²

In yet another propaganda coup, James LeMoyné announced that in response to Miranda’s charges, Defense Minister Ortega “seemed indirectly to confirm the existence of Sandinista assistance to Salvadoran rebels.” This is LeMoyné’s rendition of Ortega’s statement that the Reagan administration had no right to produce such charges given its arming of the contras. What Ortega went on to say, as LeMoyné knows but would not report, is that “the Salvadoran guerrillas have some resources and ways to get weapons” and they “are basically armed through their own efforts,” not depending “on outside sources; they are self-sufficient.” This conversion of Ortega’s denial of Nicaraguan support for Salvadoran guerrillas to an admission of such support is important for LeMoyné, because one of his major doctrines is that Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala are alike

³¹ Wilson Ring, CSM, Dec. 14; AP, Dec. 15, 1987.

³² LeMoyné, NYT, Dec. 16, David Pitt, NYT, Dec. 20, 1987.

complain about harassment (regularly featured in the Times), but survive without fear for their lives.

After CDHES president Herbert Anaya was assassinated on October 26, his widow, a lawyer who had defended political prisoners, fled with her five children to Canada. She called for an international commission to investigate the murder and offered to produce a witness who could identify the murderers from the security forces if the person’s safety could be secured. The CHEDS rejected the confession of a 19-year-old high school student in police custody that he had murdered Anaya on orders of the guerrillas. His older sister informed the press that he was asleep when the murder took place and that “physical and psychological pressures” had been used to force a confession: “He looked drugged. He looked really bad. He was totally intimidated. He said they were interrogating him day and night and that they wouldn’t let him eat.” His mother supported this testimony and told a news conference that she had been offered a bribe by the government to collaborate. These facts were omitted by the New York Times in its coverage of the confession.¹⁴

The Council on Hemispheric Affairs, in its Human Rights Review for 1987, once again named El Salvador as among the worst violators of human rights (along with Chile, Colombia, the contras, and the Shining Path guerrillas in Peru), with Guatemala, Haiti, Peru and Paraguay “close behind.” They cited the “recent violence in El Salvador” including killings “in typical death-squad fashion, the victims being shot down from a passing car or their throats slit after being tortured,” two recent deaths under custody of the National Police, and Duarte’s continuing refusal to seek justice “for the perpetra-

¹⁴ LeMoyné, NYT, Jan. 6, 8; Christopher Norton, Toronto Globe & Mail, Jan. 6; Robert Matas, G&M, Jan. 7; AP, Jan. 7, 1988. See also Marjorie Miller, LAT, Jan. 9, 1988; Guardian (New York), Jan. 20, 1988.

tors of even a single crime against a Salvadoran citizen during his more than six years of holding power.”¹⁵

In September, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS issued a report noting a “perceptible decline in the observance of human rights” in Guatemala, expressing concern over “the resumption of methods and systems for eliminating persons in mass and the reappearance of the dreadful death squads.” The Guatemalan Human Rights Commission reported 334 extrajudicial executions and 73 disappearances in the first 9 months of 1987, and an executive committee member (Toribio Pineda) visiting Washington stated that “the accords are being used as a smoke screen and the human rights situation is becoming much graver... [The accords have served] to allow violations with much more impunity.” The Costa Rica-based Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Central America informed the UN in November that in Guatemala, “repressive action has continued with the usual characteristics: the appearance of corpses with clear signs of torture on the roadsides and street; the abduction and execution of popular leaders [giving examples]; an increase in arbitrary detentions which later became forced disappearances”; and numerous “other violations which call for the attention of the international community gathered here.” The report documented some 175 cases of abductions, disappearances, and assassinations from August 8 to November 17, 1987, in addition to grenade attacks, a bomb thrown into a church, etc., while Pineda reported that the documented cases represent only a fraction of the abuses, because most take place outside of the capital (the same is reported in El Salvador), citing also indiscriminate bombings, destruction of crops, and so on.¹⁶ In both countries, as in Honduras, the

¹⁵ News and Analysis, Jan. 6, 1988; Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Jan. 20, 1988.

¹⁶ Update, Central American Historical Institute, Dec. 28, 1987; COHA, Washington Report on the Hemisphere, Feb. 3, 1988.

transmuted in a most miraculous way as they passed through the media filter, “It is not our intention to be an offensive army, capable of attacking another country. We simply want to have all the modern weapons needed to defend our country.”²⁸ To convert this into a threat to “overwhelm and terrorize” Central America is quite an achievement, even for the Free Press, which exulted that the Sandinistas themselves admitted that “with Soviet help, they plan to build a reserve army of more than half a million men” to ensure “that the party will continue to control much of Nicaragua” (James LeMoyne), not to defend Nicaragua from eventual US invasion. Defense against possible US aggression cannot be the motive for arming the population, since LeMoyne asserts as definite fact that “the United States will not invade Nicaragua,” which settles the issue. It is therefore only a cover for totalitarianism when Nicaragua’s population is mobilized while the US attack escalates and the US military carries out constant military maneuvers on its borders, and there is no reason for Nicaragua to pay attention to comments by American officials that “they worry that the end result of the Arias peace plan will be to increase the likelihood of an invasion of Nicaragua” — also cited by LeMoyne, exhibiting his considerable gift for self-refutation.²⁹

Another charge was that Nicaragua was considering actions in the US client states in the event of a US invasion, the ultimate proof that they are Stalinist monsters. Still another stunning revelation was that Nicaragua was hoping to obtain jet planes to defend its territory from US attack, an intolerable outrage. As Mary McGrory observed, “mere mention of MIGs makes hawks out of the most resolute congressional doves.”³⁰ It is, of course, well-understood that Nicaragua has no other way to prevent the CIA from supplying the forces it directs within

²⁸ FBIS-LAT-87-239, 14 December 1987, 16ff.

²⁹ James LeMoyne, NYT Magazine, Jan. 10, 1988.

³⁰ BG, Dec. 19, 1987.

beginning December 13 with two long front-page articles in the Washington Post on the remarkable revelations of this high-level defector (rewarded with \$800,000 for his services) and statements by Daniel and Humberto Ortega; others followed suit, and the topic received immense coverage and elicited much indignation. The extravaganza was timed to coincide with administration efforts, which succeeded, to ram through renewed authorization for the CIA to fly supplies into Nicaragua, thus laying the basis for continued war. The sole Miranda revelation that merited even a phrase was that the USG had been falsifying the level of Soviet and Cuban advisers, far lower, as he revealed, than had been claimed. But this is so familiar that little attention was warranted, and little was given, though not for this reason; similarly, little (if any) notice was given to the report that Cuba's foreign minister "reiterated his country's offer to withdraw its military advisers from Nicaragua once the U.S.-backed contra campaign against the Sandinista government ends" (AP, Feb. 1, 1988). Rather, there was a huge media barrage designed to show that Managua is threatening to "overwhelm and terrorize" its neighbors (Washington Post). The same Post editorial observed that "Nicaragua will be a prime place to test the sanguine forecast that [Gorbachev] is now turning down the heat in the Third World," thus placing the onus for the US attack against Nicaragua on the Russians, another impressive Agitprop achievement.²⁷

The factual basis for these impassioned charges was as follows: as reported by Miranda, and confirmed by the Ortegas, Nicaragua was planning to reduce its military forces and to provide light armaments to the general population for defense against a possible US invasion, thus creating a nation in arms — on the model of Israel, for example, though at a far lower level. As Defense Minister Ortega stated in remarks that were

²⁷ WP Weekly, Dec. 28, 1987.

provisions of the accords calling for "justice, freedom and democracy" and guarantees for "the inviolability of all forms of life and liberty" and "the safety of the people" are a cynical mockery, thanks to USG-media priorities.

In the Christian Science Monitor, which still provides professional reporting from Central America, Wilson Ring reported on January 29 that the human rights situation in Honduras has deteriorated since the accords were signed, quoting Ramon Custodio, head of the Human Rights Commission, who reported 107 assassinations by security forces in 1987. "While many acknowledge the human rights situation in Honduras is worsening," Ring continues, "all say the abuses pale in comparison with those in neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala, where political murders are an almost daily occurrence." The International Verification Commission apparently shared this assessment, one reason why it had to be dispatched to the memory hole.

Meanwhile, James LeMoyne concludes (Feb. 7) that "American support for elected governments [meaning, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras] has been a relative success." No doubt true, by some standards.

In short, the three US client states remain safely within "the Central American mode," a matter of no concern since they have been exempted from the accords by USG fiat with the tacit approval of the media and Congress.

Hawks and Doves

By mid-January, the accords had been effectively dismantled. Nevertheless, there are factors that are pressing the USG toward the position of the doves. Before turning to these matters, I would like to place the discussion in a context that seems to me relevant for understanding the unfolding events.

There are persistent features of USG policy, reflecting the stability of the domestic institutions from which it derives. A condition for entering the arena of respectable debate or participating in state management is adherence to this doctrinal framework. The basic principle is that independent nationalism and development geared to domestic needs are unacceptable. Any deviation requires that discipline be imposed, either by force or in other ways. Thus the doves argue that since “the Contra effort is woefully inadequate to achieve...democracy in Nicaragua,” we should “isolate” the “reprehensible” government in Managua and “leave it to fester in its own juices” while blocking Sandinista efforts “to export violent revolution” (Senator Alan Cranston, February 1986).¹⁷ The US clients, in contrast, merit aid and support. They conform to the Central American mode of repression, exploitation, and rule by privileged elements that accede to the demands of US power (“democracy”), so even hideous atrocities are of no account.

Within this elite consensus, there is room for tactical debate. The choices range between the hard line reliance on force and a soft line preference for economic and other pressures. Thus one may oppose the contras because the hard line option is perceived to have failed (in reality, it succeeded in its major aim of reversing social reforms and development for domestic needs, thus preventing the feared demonstration effect regularly described as “exporting violent revolution”); and with the destruction of the Nicaraguan economy, the same policy goals can be pursued by less costly means. Or one may support the contras on the grounds that violence may prove effective in enforcing “regional standards.”

The basic policy goals are frankly spelled out in the internal record. Immediately after the US destroyed Guatemalan democracy in 1954, the National Security Council produced

¹⁷ US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Feb. 27, 1986, 5.

ernment could sometimes find, though at severe cost. These consequences also permit US journalists to deplore the “bitterness and apathy in Nicaragua” (James LeMoyné),²⁵ attributing it to Sandinista mismanagement and repression. The operative question for policy, then, is whether to persist with the hard line or, as the doves typically prefer, to ensure in other ways that Nicaragua will “fester in its own juices” in “utmost deprivation and poverty” until it sees the light.

These alternatives fall well within the traditional policy consensus that the cancer of independent development must be excised. Correspondingly, these alternatives are the subject of ample debate in the media, reflecting elite controversy. This debate sometimes misleads even dissident opinion, which fails to see that it conforms to the persistent principles of policy and ideology. Departure from this framework in the Free Press is very marginal, and the elementary truths about US policy are inexpressible. Indeed it is considered inappropriate to bring up the historical or documentary record, since at each point in time, the US has undergone a miraculous change of course and the past is therefore irrelevant, a useful doctrinal principle, regularly invoked. Thus James LeMoyné, replaying the familiar record, informs us that the US “has acted inexcusably in the recent past and Americans know it,” but now all has changed, and the US is committed to fostering the required “political change in the region,”²⁶ one notable example being the sudden dedication to “democracy” in Nicaragua dating (by odd coincidence) from July 1979 — while, curiously, we follow the same policies in the region as always, except with increased brutality. In the real world, nothing relevant has changed.

The shared dove-hawk consensus was illustrated dramatically during the Miranda affair staged by the state propaganda services, with the media offering their ardent support as usual,

²⁵ NYT, Dec. 29, 1987.

²⁶ NYT, Feb. 7, 1988.

American nation, in addition to other international aid. There was an “economic miracle,” with a rapid rise in GNP — and in child malnutrition and general misery, given the nature of the development model. After Carter’s early attempt to use aid as a lever to back “Nicaragua’s forces of moderation” (i.e., the pro-US private sector), aid terminated to be replaced by lethal economic warfare. The USG policy shift coincides with a shift in Nicaragua from harsh repression and robbery of the poor to successful efforts to direct scarce resources to their needs. It is a striking feature of our political culture that the meaning of these facts cannot be understood.

The hard line today calls for military force, but this is increasingly a minority view. By 1986, the contra option was opposed by 80% of “leaders,” the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations reports.²⁴ The soft line calls for the resort to less violent measures now that US terror has succeeded in overcoming the threat of improvements in health and literacy and the “virus” of successful development that might, it was feared, have had a demonstration effect in a “revolution without borders” (all of this concealed in conventional rhetoric, with the fraud particularly transparent by virtue of the extraordinary degree of lying). It is also anticipated that the social fabric has been sufficiently torn to shreds, and enough popular disaffection created, to add considerably to the massive problems of reconstruction, should the US military attack diminish. It is assumed that people will blame those in power for their suffering and all can see that it is because of the Sandinistas that the US persists in driving Nicaragua to ruin. Apart from the military attack, US economic warfare has been highly effective in reversing development, undermining health and other social services, and wiping out private enterprise, unable to develop alternative sources of supply and markets that the gov-

²⁴ John E. Rielly, ed., *American Public Opinion and U.S. Foreign Policy 1987*, Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, March 1987.

a Top Secret Memorandum titled “U.S. Policy Toward Latin America” (NSC 5432). It opened by explaining that the major threat to US interests is “the trend in Latin America toward nationalistic regimes” that respond to “popular demand for immediate improvement in the low living standards of the masses” and for production geared to domestic needs. This is intolerable, because the US is committed to “encouraging a climate conducive to private investment,” and must “encourage” the Latin American countries “to base their economies on a system of private enterprise, and, as essential thereto, to create a political and economic climate conducive to private investment of both domestic and foreign capital,” including guarantees for the “opportunity to earn and in the case of foreign capital to repatriate a reasonable return.” These principles are reiterated elsewhere, often verbatim (e.g., NSC 5613/1, Sept. 25, 1956). The Latin American countries must concentrate on export-oriented production in accord with the needs of US investors. To facilitate these goals, so this and later documents explain forthrightly, it is necessary for the US to control the Latin American military, which has the responsibility to overthrow civilian governments that do not conform to US requirements (called “the welfare of the nation”); the methods are examined in detail. It is also necessary to overcome the excessive liberalism of Latin American governments, to block “subversion” (that is, the wrong ideas), and in general to bar any challenge to US domination. The US has no objection to democratic forms — indeed, these are useful for the purposes of population control at home — but only if conditions are established, by violence if necessary, to ensure that the threat of independent development, social reform and broad democratic participation has been overcome. Closet Marxists in planning circles perceive that a class struggle is in process in Latin America, and that to win this struggle, the US may have to rely on force, since plainly it lacks political appeal among “the masses” with their unacceptable aspirations and susceptibility to what inter-

nal documents call “ultranationalism,” meaning efforts to break out of the approved mold.¹⁸

These problems arise throughout the world. During the Vietnam war, USG scholarship and captured Vietnamese documents agreed that the US is militarily strong but politically weak, and therefore must displace confrontation from the political to the military arena, where violence can prevail. Much the same has been true in Latin America, and remains so.

Ideas of this nature have been implemented since World War II in order to maintain a world system subordinated to the needs of the US economy, or more accurately, its proprietors. It is hardly surprising that elite groups that dominate US political life should formulate and implement such global programs, just as it is natural that all of this should be suppressed in a well-functioning ideological system. Crucially, evolving policy conforms generally to the directives outlined in internal documents. In particular, there is a good correlation between US aid and the investment climate in Third World countries; and given the means required to safeguard the basic policy principles, we find that as a corollary, US aid correlates with human rights violations. In Latin America, the leading academic specialist on the topic concluded from a revealing study that US aid “has tended to flow disproportionately to...the hemisphere’s relatively egregious violators of fundamental human rights,” to governments “which torture their citizens” (Lars Schoultz). Other studies have shown the same, and the reasons are not hard to discern.

The tactical choices within this framework cannot be associated with particular individuals or groups. Thus Henry Kissinger was a dove with regard to China, where he agreed with Richard Nixon that the hard line policy was unpro-

¹⁸ For references and further details, see my *On Power and Ideology* (South End, 1987, lecture 1).

traced to the historic decision of the Kennedy administration to shift the mission of the Latin American military to “internal security.”²³ The conference passed without notice here, and, of course, none of this falls within the canon of terrorism as conceived in the civilized world.

In the case of Nicaragua, after a brief experiment with soft line measures to place privileged US-backed elements in power (“supporting democracy”), the US turned to terror and economic warfare. An impediment to the normal policies was that the Nicaraguan military could not be converted into a subversive force in the usual fashion. Therefore it was necessary to construct a proxy army to attack Nicaragua from foreign bases, a variant of familiar programs.

The sharp change in US policy towards Nicaragua is instructive. In the 1960s and 1970s, under Somoza’s tyranny, Nicaragua was one of the highest per capita recipients of US economic aid in Latin America, because, as the AID mission explained in 1977, “U.S. investment is welcomed in Nicaragua’s developing free enterprise economy” and Somoza supports US policy objectives. Military assistance was high, to ensure that Somoza’s National Guard could perform its functions (see Tom Barry and Deb Preusch, *The Soft War* (Grove, 1988)). Not long after the Guard was driven from Nicaragua, this massive aid resumed, to its successor force; the Reaganite propaganda victory has been so extraordinary that in congressional debate, contra aid is often described as “aid to Nicaragua,” even by the most outspoken doves, who oppose Reagan’s “desire to aid Nicaragua” (Rep. Barney Frank of Massachusetts, *Congressional Record*, Dec. 9, 1987). Economic aid was also high in the 60s and 70s. Under Carter, more such aid went to Nicaragua than to any other Central

²³ *Torture in Latin America*, LADOC (Latin American Documentation), Lima, 1987. See Chomsky and Edward Herman, *The Political Economy of Human Rights*, vol. I (South End, 1979); Lars Schoultz, *Human Rights and United States Policy toward Latin America* (Princeton, 1981).

tactical debate terminated when it appeared that the slaughter conducted by the US mercenary army was achieving its goals. We should not overlook the success of these policies. Well after the 1984 elections that established “democracy” in El Salvador to the applause of the Free Press and responsible opinion generally, the human rights organization Socorro Juridico, operating under the protection of the Archdiocese of San Salvador, observed that the continuing terror is still conducted by “the same members of the armed forces who enjoy official approval and are adequately trained to carry out these acts of collective suffering.” “Salvadoran society, affected by terror and panic, a result of the persistent violation of basic human rights, shows the following traits: collective intimidation and generalized fear, on the one hand, and on the other the internalized acceptance of the terror because of the daily and frequent use of violent means. In general, society accepts the frequent appearance of tortured bodies, because basic rights, the right to life, has absolutely no overriding value for society.”

The last comment also applies to the society that oversees these operations, as underscored by George Shultz in one of his lamentations on terrorism (April 14, 1986, a talk delivered at the very moment of the US terror bombing of Libya). In El Salvador, he declaimed, “the results are something all Americans can be proud of” — at least, all Americans who enjoy the sight of tortured bodies, starving children, terror and panic and generalized fear.

These observations on Salvadoran society under “democracy” were presented at the First International Seminar on Torture in Latin America at Buenos Aires in December 1985, a conference devoted to “the repressive system” that “has at its disposal knowledge and a multinational technology of terror, developed in specialized centers whose purpose is to perfect methods of exploitation, oppression and dependence of individuals and entire peoples” by the use of “state terrorism inspired by the Doctrine of National Security,” which can be

ductive and that other measures could draw China into the US-dominated global system. At the same time he was a hawk with regard to the Middle East, supporting Israel’s refusal to accept a full-scale peace treaty offered by Egypt and Jordan in early 1971 and blocking State Department moves toward a diplomatic resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, establishing a policy that still prevails and explains much of what is happening in that region today.

We can learn a good deal by attention to the range of choices. Keeping just to Latin America, consider the efforts to eliminate the Allende regime in Chile. There were two parallel operations. Track II, the hard line, aimed at a military coup. This was concealed from Ambassador Edward Korry, a Kennedy liberal, whose task was to implement Track I, the soft line; in Korry’s words, to “do all within our power to condemn Chile and the Chileans to utmost deprivation and poverty, a policy designed for a long time to come to accelerate the hard features of a Communist society in Chile.” The soft line was an extension of the long-term CIA effort to control Chilean democracy. One indication of its level is that in the 1964 election, the CIA spent twice as much per Chilean voter to block Allende as the total spent per voter by both parties in the US elections of the same year.¹⁹ Similarly in the case of Cuba, the Eisenhower administration planned a direct attack while Vice-President Nixon, keeping to the soft line in a secret discussion of June 1960, expressed his concern that according to a CIA briefing, “Cuba’s economic situation had not deteriorated significantly since the overthrow of Batista,” then urging specific measures to place “greater economic pressure on Cuba.”²⁰

To take another case of contemporary relevance, in 1949 the CIA identified “two areas of instability” in Latin America: Bo-

¹⁹ Gregory Trevorton, *Covert Action* (Basic Books, 1987), 18.

²⁰ Memorandum for Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 25 June 1960, Secret.

livia and Guatemala (Review of the World Situation, 17 August 1949). The Eisenhower administration pursued the hard line to overthrow capitalist democracy in Guatemala but chose the soft line with regard to a Bolivian revolution that had the support of the Communist Party and radical tin miners, had led to expropriation, and had even moved towards “criminal agitation of the Indians of the farms and mines” and a pro-peace conference, as a reactionary Archbishop warned.²¹ The USG concluded that the best plan was to support the least radical elements, expecting that US pressures, including domination of the tin market, would serve to control unwanted developments. As John Foster Dulles explained, this would be the best way to contain the “Communist infection in South America”; terms such as “infection,” “virus,” “cancer,” etc., are standard in the public and internal records, rhetoric not without precedent in recent history. In accordance with standard doctrine, the US took control over the Bolivian military, equipping it with modern armaments and sending hundreds of officers to the “school of coups” in Panama and elsewhere. Bolivia was soon subject to US influence and control. By 1953, the NSC noted improvement in “the climate for private investment,” including “an agreement permitting a private American firm to exploit two petroleum areas” (NSC 141/1, “Progress Report,” July 23, 1953). A military coup took place in 1964. A 1980 coup was carried out with the assistance of Klaus Barbie, who had been sent to Bolivia when he could no longer be protected in France, where he had been carrying out anti-resistance activities under US control as he had done under the Nazis. By now, one out of three Bolivian infants dies in the first year of life, so that Bolivia has the slowest rate of population growth in Latin America along with the highest birth rate, according to a recent UNICEF study. The FAO estimates that the average

²¹ Bryce Wood, *The Dismantling of the Good Neighbor Policy* (U. of Texas press, 1985).

Bolivian consumes 78% of daily minimum calorie and protein requirements and that more than half of Bolivian children suffer from malnutrition. Of the economically active population, 25% are unemployed and another 40% work in the “informal sector” (e.g., smuggling and drugs).²²

Several points merit attention. First, the consequences of the hard line in Guatemala and the soft line in Bolivia were similar. Second, both policy decisions were successful in their major aim: containing the “Communist virus,” the threat of “ultranationalism.” Third, both policies are evidently regarded as quite proper, as we can see in the case of Bolivia by the complete lack of interest in what has happened since (apart from possible costs to the US through the drug racket); and with regard to Guatemala, by the successful intervention under Kennedy to block a democratic election, the direct US participation in murderous counterinsurgency campaigns under Lyndon Johnson, the continuing supply of arms to Guatemala through the late 1970s and the reliance on our Israeli mercenary state to fill any gaps, the enthusiastic US support for atrocities that go well beyond even the astonishing Guatemalan norm in the 1980s, and the applause for the “fledgling democracy” that the ruling military now tolerate as a means to extort money from Congress. We may say that these are “messy episodes” and “blundering” (which in fact succeeded in its major aims), but nothing more (Stephen Kinzer, Jan. 10, 1988). Fourth, the soft line and the hard line were adopted by the same people, at the same time, revealing that the issues are tactical, involving no departure from shared principle. All of this provides insight into the nature of US policy, and the prevailing political culture.

With these considerations in mind, let us turn to current US policies toward Central America, where there was a challenge to the persistent principles in the 1970s. In El Salvador, the US wasted little time in moving towards the hard line, and

²² *Latinamerica press* (Lima), Dec. 24, 1987.