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U.S. POLICIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA WIN SUPPORT OVERSEAS

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most perverse myth about U.S. policy toward Central America is that Washington is isolated diplomatically. This clearly is not now true--if indeed it ever was. U.S. policy toward Central America, especially Nicaragua, is receiving growing acceptance and even positive support from Western European and Latin American nations. As the facts about the Soviet-Cuban threat have become better understood, earlier coolness or opposition to the goals of U.S. Central American policy have been increasingly replaced with attitudes and policies that reflect, or parallel, U.S. objectives. While there is less consensus and outright support for U.S. policies toward El Salvador than for those toward Nicaragua, there still exist areas where diplomatic, economic, and even military support is evident.

The growing inter-American consensus, increasingly shared by Western European states, stems primarily from developments in Nicaragua. Fears of Nicaraguan-Soviet-Cuban supported aggression and subversion of the region are widely shared by South and Central American states. Out of this inter-American consensus has reemerged, probably in its clearest form ever, a desire for security and political cooperation and, to a lesser extent, economic cooperation. The 21-point political proposal of the regional Contadora Group, supported by the United States and Latin American and Western European states, has underscored the growing consensus as to democratic values and individual liberty.

Militarily, there is now greater cooperation between free Western Hemisphere states in the form of arms sales and credits, training, and collective security negotiations. There is also a new willingness to support economically the region's fledgling democratic and noncommunist countries, which are confronted by Soviet-Cuban sponsored instability and subversion, as well as by structural economic problems.

Increasingly, the objectives of encouraging democracy and economic development, and at the same time, discouraging Marxist-Leninist subversion, are shared by the U.S. and those countries in Western Europe and Latin America that are active in Central America. The myth that the U.S. is morally and diplomatically isolated in its efforts to deter the spread of Soviet-style communism in Central America can no longer be sustained against this backdrop of regional cooperation, multilateral and anti-communist efforts, and increasing understanding by the free world that the security and freedom of the Western Hemisphere are at stake.

BACKGROUND

In the 1978-1979 period leading up to and following the overthrow of Nicaraguan President Anastasio Somoza, many Western European and some Latin American governments acquiesced in the idea that radical change by means of violent revolution was perhaps the only way to improve social, political, and economic conditions in Central American countries, long afflicted by poverty, government corruption, and varying degrees of repression. For this reason, the Nicaraguan revolutionary groups fighting to overthrow Somoza received considerable foreign assistance. Even after the Sandinistas had consolidated power at the expense of the democratic elements of the revolution, this support continued unabated for some time. Meanwhile, and for the same reason, economic and political support was withdrawn by many Latin American and Western European countries and the U.S. from the government of Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador. In addition, some of these countries began to give aid and political support to the Salvadoran guerrillas. The idea was to align with the "forces of change"--to be on the winning side of the revolution, which was considered inevitable.

As the Sandinistas began to consolidate power in Nicaragua with the aid of the Soviet-bloc countries, and as Nicaragua began to manifest itself as a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist state and to amass a military arsenal completely out of proportion to its size, foreign enthusiasm for left-wing insurrection began to wane. A significant signal of shifting Latin American attitudes toward the revolutionary left occurred after the Mexican government and the French Socialist government of President Francois Mitterrand in August 1981 declared their support for the Salvadoran rebels as a legitimate "representative political force" and called for the "restructuring" of the Salvadoran government and army to include the guerrillas before any elections were held. Almost immediately more than a dozen Latin American states rallied to the support of the Duarte government and condemned Mexico and France for irresponsible meddling in the affairs of El Salvador.¹ Further, Colombia and Venezuela joined the U.S. in providing

¹ Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Peru, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Venezuela joined together in protest at the OAS on September 3, 1981.

badly needed economic and political support to the vulnerable Salvadoran government.²

The Venezuelan and Colombian action struck a chord within the Hemisphere. A new alignment started taking shape that put the weight of its political and economic support on the side of established right-of-center and centrist governments rather than on the side of radical left political and guerrilla forces. Only two years before, these countries had led the way in Latin America in recognizing the Sandinista movement. Now, instead of there being an isolated right-of-center bloc, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Mexico were beginning to be isolated. Finally, under pressure from Venezuela and other Latin American countries, Mexico in September 1981 issued a "clarification" that Mexico "did not recognize the [Salvadoran] opposition as a legitimate government, or even a belligerent."³

Western European countries, however, were slow to follow this lead. France continued to pursue its activist, "socialist"⁴ policies by providing the Sandinista government aid through arms sales and credits as well as economic and political support. West Germany, the Netherlands, and Spain asserted active political roles in Central America along the lines of socialist France. These European governments, for example, continued to press El Salvador to start power-sharing negotiations with the guerrillas even though the Salvadoran election, which was internationally monitored, had in effect defeated the guerrillas at the polls.

Nonetheless, general support for revolutionary movements and change became increasingly untenable as the Marxist-Leninist characteristics of the "progressive" groups emerged in the wake of the Sandinistas' success in consolidating power in Nicaragua.

EUROPEAN POLICY SHIFTS: NICARAGUA

Political Changes

As Nicaragua took on the character of a totalitarian state, despite the economic and political efforts of some Western European socialist parties to moderate the Sandinista regime, basic assumptions of socialist foreign policy toward Central America began

² At the end of 1980, the Carter Administration began to send economic aid and military advisers to El Salvador, because it had conclusive evidence that Nicaragua was shipping arms and ammunition to the guerrillas in El Salvador.

³ The San Diego Union, October 1, 1981.

⁴ When Francois Mitterrand became president in May 1981, he stated that France's foreign policy would henceforth be "socialist." The thrust of its foreign policy would be in the direction of human rights and Third World problems; issues would no longer be perceived in terms of the East-West context, but North-South. France would support as part of this policy the "national liberation" groups in Africa, and if necessary, in Central America.

to be reassessed.⁵ France increasingly has had to modify its socialist rhetoric as a result of its confrontation with Soviet sponsored aggression in Chad and to some degree in Lebanon. It has had to take a more East-West point of view in the Caribbean as well, as its ex-colony Guadeloupe has become a target for subversion and takeover.

A similar change has occurred in West Germany. In 1981, Helmut Schmidt's Social Democratic government withdrew all support from the U.S.-backed Duarte government and closed its embassy in El Salvador. Through the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and Socialist International, Bonn channeled substantial amounts of aid to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. But it has discontinued such measures, partly due to U.S. pressure but also because of Schmidt's election defeat. The new West German government of Helmut Kohl recognizes the threat posed to the U.S., and thus to Western Europe, by the large Soviet-bloc presence in the northern tier of Latin America.⁶ Except for the Scandinavian countries, which still support extreme Marxist-Leninist groups in Central America, other Western European countries have followed France and West Germany in shifting their support to more democratic, or at least less anti-democratic, solutions to the region's problems.

Changes in European policies can also be traced to Western Europe's disillusionment with the Sandinista regime because of its close ties to Cuba and the Soviet Union and its attitude toward its domestic critics. "We were very enthusiastic about the Sandinista revolution because we thought it would be truly nonaligned," stated a European diplomat to The New York Times. "But it seems clear now that the Sandinista political project is to radicalize the regime and lean more heavily each day on the Communist bloc. Europeans are only just beginning to realize this."⁷ In addition, the confrontational treatment of Pope John Paul II during his visit to Nicaragua last spring deeply shocked many Western Europeans and apparently forced them to take a closer, more realistic look at the Sandinistas.

This modified attitude toward Nicaragua has led to a growing willingness by Western European governments to support U.S. and Latin American efforts to have Nicaragua commit itself to a framework of democratic pluralism and nonaggression. For example, at the United Nations this past November, Western European nations abstained from a vote on a resolution proposed by Nicaragua, which sought to condemn the U.S. as an aggressor in the region. Instead they supported the version put forth by Costa Rica and endorsed by the U.S., which emphasized the regional Contadora

⁵ For an in-depth analysis of European socialist foreign policies in Central America, see Eusebio Mujal-Leon's "European Socialism and the Crises in Central America," to be published by the American Enterprise Institute in Rift and Revolution, the Central American Embroglio.

⁶ See also Edward A. Lynch, "Moscow Eyes the Caribbean," Heritage Foundation Background No. 284, August 17, 1983.

⁷ The New York Times, November 16, 1983, p. A1.

group's efforts to establish free elections and human rights. In the debate on these resolutions, Nicaragua's failure to hold elections and its violations of its neighbors' sovereignty became the focus of attention.⁸

The Socialist International, which has become stridently anti-American under the leadership of Willy Brandt, now is out of step with the European desire for moderate solutions to Central America's problems. The Socialist International continues unqualified support for the Sandinista government and its association with the extreme left in the Caribbean and Central American region.⁹

Economic Policy

The disillusionment with the Sandinista regime also effected changes in West European economic policies. In the early stages of Sandinista rule, most European governments rationalized giving economic assistance and selling arms to Nicaragua as necessary to prevent its falling into the Soviet camp. Now that Nicaragua has clearly aligned itself with Moscow and Havana, West European governments are less interested in helping the Sandinista regime beyond significantly reduced humanitarian aid.

This new attitude was clearly evident in the meetings between Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge and West European officials in September and October of 1983 during Borge's tour of Europe to obtain economic and military aid. The French government of Socialist President Mitterrand, concerned over ties between Nicaragua, Libya, and the Palestine Liberation Organization, refused Borge's request. French officials noted that Mitterrand had lost much of his enthusiasm for the Sandinista cause and that the decision by French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson to receive Borge for only five minutes reflected a change in French views. Regis Debray, Mitterrand adviser for Latin America, was described as "extremely disappointed with the turn of events in Nicaragua."¹⁰

⁸ The Washington Post, November 12, 1983, p. A25.

⁹ See Arnold M. Silver, "The New Face of the Socialist International," Heritage Foundation Institution Analysis No. 16, October 1981, in which Mr. Silver states, "Socialist International officials assert that they are attempting to prevent Castroism or Soviet influence in El Salvador. In 1979, they made the same assertions with regard to Nicaragua. It is noteworthy, however, that in the entire stream of SI denunciations of Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, Paraguay, Uruguay and Honduras there has never been an SI condemnation of Castroism, never a call for pluralism in Cuba. And in the general resolution adopted in November 1980 by the SI Congress in Madrid, Cuba is not mentioned. The effort by Fanny Simon of the Social Democrats USA to include criticism of Cuban policy in the Latin American-Caribbean region during the pre-Congress Bureau meeting was rejected on the instigation of the British Labor Party and Jamaican People's National Party representative.

¹⁰ The New York Times, November 16, 1983, p. A1.

Spain had supported the Sandinistas enthusiastically. Now Madrid appears more skeptical of their policies because of the substantial evidence provided by Costa Rica that Spain's Basque ETA terrorists are being trained in Nicaragua. The Spanish government has not granted further economic aid to Nicaragua.

In the Netherlands, Borge's reception was decidedly cool. Foreign Minister Van Den Broek, in meeting with Borge, stated his concern over the direction taken by the Sandinista government. He added that the Dutch government was "especially concerned over the absence of any prospect for the restoration of legal order and human rights."¹¹ The Netherlands had been contributing significant amounts of economic aid to the Sandinistas. It is now withholding further aid until it sees genuine progress toward democratic pluralism and human rights in Nicaragua.

The government of West Germany, likewise, has decided to withhold further economic assistance. In a meeting with Borge, Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher stated that his government was gravely concerned over the violent direction taken by Nicaragua, and that all aid would be withdrawn pending Nicaraguan progress toward democratic pluralism, human rights, freedom of the press, and private sector autonomy.¹²

EUROPEANS AND EL SALVADOR

West Germany

On the diplomatic front, West Germany responded to U.S. prodding and is reopening its embassy in San Salvador this month. The Kohl government has recognized the legitimacy of the current elected Salvadoran government.

Although Bonn's diplomatic support for the U.S. in the case of El Salvador is limited because of West German political factors, it nevertheless has inaugurated policies that parallel those of the U.S. West Germany no longer sends aid to the Salvadoran guerrillas but instead is negotiating an economic development package for the Salvadoran government.

France

In recent weeks President Mitterrand publicly has criticized U.S. policies in El Salvador. Yet his government has provided what can be interpreted as military arms and credit to neighboring Honduras, a staunch military ally of the U.S. and El Salvador. Recently, Honduras received approximately \$8 million in credits for telecommunications equipment and navigational aids from France. In addition, although France has refused to sell any

¹¹ La Nacion, October 6, 1983; and conversations with Robert Haslach, Information Officer for the Chancery of the Netherlands, November 8, 1983.

¹² Unable to get the economic and political support he wanted, Borge flew to Libya where he was reported to have received pledges of increased aid. The New York Times, November 16, 1983, p. A1.

more arms to Nicaragua, its arms exports to Latin America have increased this year to 25 percent of its total arms exports; most of this has gone to Central America.¹³

Great Britain

The U.S. always has enjoyed London's diplomatic backing. Now there are indications that British material influence in the region, as well, is being applied in support of U.S. policies. Example: the British government has continued to station 1,800 troops, Harrier jets, and Puma helicopters in its ex-colony Belize not only to provide a deterrent to Guatemala's territorial claims, but also to assure stability in an area increasingly threatened by communist expansion. British presence is seen as an "honorable" contribution and as symbolic backing of Washington's efforts to establish stability in a region considered vital to U.S. security interests.¹⁴

Strong diplomatic backing for the U.S. was recently reiterated by Sir Geoffrey Howe, Britain's Foreign Secretary. He stated that "Britain absolutely endorsed" the objectives of democracy, development, dialogue, and defense that the U.S. is pursuing. The aim of U.S. policies, he added, is to strengthen the forces of democracy in an area threatened by communist takeover.¹⁵

SUPPORT FROM LATIN-AMERICAN SOURCES

Argentina and Brazil

Although officials of Argentina and Brazil privately have expressed concern over Soviet expansion in the Caribbean and Central American region, they have been cautious, for domestic reasons, in their public endorsement of U.S. policies of stabilizing the Salvadoran government and putting pressure on Nicaragua.

Argentina and Brazil, for example, have provided important military support to El Salvador. Brazil recently approved the sale of military aircraft, valued at \$15 million, to Honduras, an ally of the U.S. and El Salvador and Argentina recently approved a \$17,204,780 sale of arms and ammunition. In addition, there are an estimated 20 Argentine military advisers in Honduras.¹⁶

The Contadora Group: Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, and Panama

Contrary to most expectations, the Contadora process of regional negotiations has not pressed the U.S. to reduce its

¹³ Defense and Foreign Affairs Weekly, October 24, 1983, p. 1.

¹⁴ The New York Times, November 30, 1983, p. A1.

¹⁵ The Times of London, August 12, 1983.

¹⁶ Had the U.S. remained neutral in the Falklands-Malvinas war, it is likely that Argentine advisers would have remained in El Salvador and Honduras. Argentina's new President Raul Alfonsin appears to be completing the process of disengagement from Central America with his recent statement that Argentina would end all aid to anti-Sandinista militants.

involvement in the region. Rather, the process has put pressure on the Sandinista dictatorship to end its anti-democratic practices and its "export of revolution." And instead of condemning the U.S. for its strong position against Nicaragua, November's U.N. resolution produced a consensus among the other American states for the Contadora's proposal for "democratic, representative, and pluralistic systems." This is seen as a reprimand of Nicaragua, which has made no progress toward democracy and whose human rights violations are of growing international concern.

Colombia, a significant force in the region and a member of the Contadora Group, has indicated that it endorses the U.S. position toward the Soviet-Cuban threat. Last spring, Colombian President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala accused the Soviets of trying to undermine governments in the regions through its surrogates Cuba and Nicaragua, stating that "all the countries in the region are threatened by communist penetration from Cuba operating through Nicaragua...the fight in the Caribbean today is between democracy and Marxist governments and not between democracies and fascist governments--those have mostly disappeared."¹⁷ Colombia's new President, Belisario Bentancur strongly advocates pressuring the Sandinistas to moderate their "revolutionary" activities. He has urged Mexico to take a harder line toward Nicaragua's policies.

Newly elected President Jaime Lusinchi of Venezuela, another Contadora member, also has adopted a harder line towards the Nicaraguan junta, threatening to cut off all support if the Sandinistas continue to "play the Cuban game."

With regard to El Salvador, in a significant bolstering of U.S. efforts, Colombia recently announced a \$5 million credit to El Salvador in "view of the commercial ties and bonds of Latin American brotherhood that exist between the two countries."¹⁸

Panama

The growing interest in establishing frameworks for inter-American cooperation in defense of hemispheric security has led to recent talks between the governments of Panama and the U.S. to keep the School of the Americas operating past 1984, when it is due to be phased out under the terms of the Panama Canal Treaties. This school was founded in 1946 jointly by the American states in defense against outside communist aggression. In October, moreover, a Panamanian government spokesman stated that "together with the U.S. government we will implement plans for the growth of forces for joint defense of the Panama Canal."¹⁹

Costa Rica

Costa Rica has the longest democratic history in Central American and supported anti-Somoza groups in the revolution that

¹⁷ The New York Times, March 18, 1982, p. 12.

¹⁸ Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) Latin America, June 7, 1983, P4.

¹⁹ FBIS Latin America, November 3, 1983, N2.

brought the Sandinistas to power. It is significant, therefore, that it recently has threatened to invoke the Rio Treaty against Nicaragua for acts of aggression against Costa Rica. Calling an emergency session at the Organization of American States, Costa Rica accused Nicaragua of "cowardly aggression" and of harboring plans to force its Marxist system on other Latin American states.

Prior to these attacks, Costa Rica had maintained a strict neutrality in Central American crises and carefully avoided publicly supporting U.S. efforts to deter Nicaraguan aggression. This has changed as Nicaragua repeatedly has violated the territory of its neighbors.²⁰

Costa Rica also has asked the U.S. to assist in training its security forces to fight against internal subversion.²¹ In September 1983, for the first time, Costa Rica publicly stated its need for U.S. assistance in the efforts to combat terrorism and other forms of aggression. President Luis Alberto Monge stated that "Costa Rica will not be deprived of its peace and liberty, because it has friendly nations who will not permit this, such as the United States...."²² This independent and democratic nation apparently considers U.S. involvement in the region not only legitimate but necessary.

Honduras

The Honduran government and people have welcomed a U.S. presence, including joint military maneuvers.²³ Honduras also has aided the U.S. and the Salvadoran Army significantly in the battle against the Nicaraguan-supplied guerrilla forces. Nicaragua recently built five new airbases, three of which are located close to the Honduran border. In response to such Nicaraguan hostility and arms buildup, the Hondurans, with the aid of the U.S., have been building airbases and training centers to deter Nicaraguan incursions across its borders as well as the repeated violations

²⁰ Wall Street Journal article of December 2, 1983 by Huber Matos, Jr. stated, "Nicaragua represents a menace to the Costa Ricans, as well as a source of subversion that is linked, both ideologically and strategically, to Fidel Castro and the Soviet Union...." "Costa Rica," Nicaragua's Interior Minister Tomas Borge has stated, "is the dessert." In other words, it is the last country to be swallowed up.

²¹ Unfortunately for Costa Rica, the U.S. is limited from doing so by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 which, as amended in 1974, prohibits the use of U.S. funds "to provide training or advice or provide any financial support for police, prisons, or other law enforcement forces for any foreign government."

²² FBIS Latin America, September 12, 1983, P1.

²³ The people of Honduras have also expressed their support of their government's policy encouraging U.S. presence in their country according to a recent newspaper poll in Honduras. This fact was provided by Ambassador to Honduras John D. Negroponte to a White House Outreach Working Group on Central America, December 7, 1983.

of its airspace by Cuban, Soviet, and Nicaraguan aircraft. Honduras is also providing facilities for U.S. aircraft and equipment.

CONDECA

This past October, top defense commanders from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, with the U.S. Southern Command observing, met in Guatemala to discuss reviving the Council for the Defense of Central America, better known as CONDECA.²⁴

The objective, as stated at the meeting, was to "counter extra-continental aggression of a Marxist-Leninist character." The CONDECA group stated specifically that its purpose was not to invade Nicaragua but to defend its members from invasion."²⁵

The revival of CONDECA is significant because its members historically have been unfriendly to one another. Noted a U.S. official:

The Sandinistas seem to have done what no one else might have, and that is they have driven them [El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala] into one another's arms to make common cause against an accurately perceived threat.²⁶

CONDECA will attempt to interdict supplies going from Nicaragua to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Part of the four-point plan approved by this group seeks to establish cooperation between the Honduran, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran navies to patrol the Gulf of Fonseca to prevent shipment of arms from Nicaragua to the guerrillas in El Salvador. While it is true that lingering memories of past hostile feelings remain, it is significant that CONDECA has been actively considered. U.S. policy, therefore, not only is endorsed by these three Central American states, it is actively and materially supported.

Organization of American States (OAS)

In light of increased U.S. involvement in Central America, in particular the involvement in El Salvador, the large presence in Honduras, and the participation in the Grenadian rescue operation, it is highly significant that the OAS has not produced a single resolution condemning the U.S. over these issues. Moreover, in 1982 the OAS voted 22-3 in support of orderly elections in El Salvador as the radical left was threatening to disrupt the elections. The U.S. Ambassador to the OAS, J. William Middendorf II, has stated publicly more than once that the Latin American and

²⁴ CONDECA, headquartered in Guatemala, was formed 19 years ago by Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. It fell into disarray following the war between Honduras and El Salvador and effectively ceased functioning after the Sandinista National Liberation Front came to power in Nicaragua in 1979.

²⁵ United Press International (UPI), October 8, 1983.

²⁶ Washington Times, November 26, 1983, p. 2C.

Caribbean states "are with us."²⁷ This has been conveyed to him repeatedly, although in private, by representatives at the OAS.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. should continue the dialogue with members of Western European governments, including opposition parties such as the Social Democratic Party in West Germany. The U.S. must take advantage of the split between the moderate and extreme left of the influential socialist parties to persuade the moderates to favor democratic solutions in Central America and restrain their radical counterparts from supporting the nondemocratic left in Central America. The differences between Western Europe and the U.S. in Central America have many causes, which stem mainly from European misunderstanding of the cultural and political character of Central American nations. It is therefore important for the U.S. to provide Western European allies with a steady flow of accurate facts and analyses. The U.S. must emphasize the reality of Soviet-Cuban strategy and influence in the region and the implications this has for Western security, particularly the U.S. ability to assist in a successful conventional defense of Western Europe.²⁸

Latin American nations have responded to U.S. initiatives to protect the Western Hemisphere as far back as 1823 when the Monroe Doctrine was enunciated.²⁹ Unfortunately, the U.S. often has not followed through on its desire for regional cooperation against outside aggression. Now there is great potential for multilateral cooperation, as Latin American nations overcome their wariness of U.S. interest in their region and seem more willing to work with Washington.

The emphasis on regional development through private direct investment and freer trade, as embodied in President Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative, has created substantial economic cooperation. Nevertheless serious trade problems remain. The U.S. still maintains a global quota system in which the amount of sugar, for example, that the U.S. buys is divided among all the countries in the world. This means that Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador together can sell the U.S. only about 3 percent of total U.S. sugar imports. This leaves these countries with a surplus, which sold at world prices does not cover even production costs. U.S. strategic interest in the economic stability of the

²⁷ Statement made by Ambassador Middendorf at the White House Outreach Working Group on Central America, December 21, 1983.

²⁸ Report of the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, January 1984, p. 124.

²⁹ Latin American states, fearing the recolonization designs of the European powers, supported the Monroe Doctrine and the Western Hemisphere idea. They hoped to make the doctrine multilateral, but the U.S., a fledgling power at the time, refused the offer.

region necessitates a more regional emphasis on trade. The assessments of quotas should be more consonant with the long-term U.S. policy goals in the region.

U.S. assistance should not bolster obsolete socialist programs, which only fatten bureaucracies and rarely achieve the equitable distribution of wealth that they promise. Instead, the U.S. should promote economic growth by urging programs for lower taxes and private sector development as the means for creating and distributing wealth.

Requests for military advisors, training, and materiel can no longer be ignored. Costa Rica, which has no army, has asked U.S. assistance in developing security forces to defend itself from Nicaraguan encroachments and terrorist activities. The Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibits such assistance, should be amended to lift this restriction. It clearly is at odds with U.S. and the region's security needs.

CONCLUSION

President Reagan's anti-communist stance has provoked some derision from critics in the U.S. and Western Europe. Yet it has been welcomed by Latin American, especially Central American, states, which depend on U.S. assistance to assure the economic, political, and military strength to deter communist insurgencies.

The belief prevalent during the Carter Administration and in some political circles in Western Europe that Central American nations were heading ineluctably toward radical change, and that democratic values were nonexistent or inapplicable, is being rapidly disproved by recent events. The free elections in El Salvador and Honduras, the creation of the Central American Democratic Community, and the Contadora proposals are concrete refutations of communist solutions.

The "problem" of Nicaragua, too, has forced reassessment of Western European acceptance of radical solutions. Western European governments no longer support the Sandinistas and other Marxist-Leninist groups such as the rebels in El Salvador. They favor instead the democratic process as the means of achieving an end to the crisis.

This reorientation has brought the policies of many Western European governments into line with U.S. goals. Given this clear if sometimes indirect support, the U.S. is not alone in Central America.

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