

## II. How the trap was set

by Timothy Rush

“El Salvador is next,” ran the refrain after the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua on July 19, 1979. But there was nothing inevitable about the way a bloody terrorist civil war in El Salvador was built up and has now been dumped at the Reagan administration’s doorstep a year and a half later.

This “tar baby” operation was a consciously plotted project *from the outside*, each principal force conveying the orders into its on-the-scene operatives—Socialist International, Christian Democracy, Jesuit “left” and Soviet-Cuban KGB circles.

In the welter of mutually reinforcing moves made by “right” and “left” forces, one theme stands out: the effort to lock Mexico into the “left” side of the equation, and the Reagan administration into the “right” side.

In March 1980, the Socialist International took the lead. Under the chairmanship of West Germany’s Willy Brandt, the Social Democrats staged their annual meeting on Latin American soil for the first time. This was in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic, and the corresponding focus of attention was the Caribbean and Central America. The final communiqué expressed the Socialist International’s solidarity with the left opposition in El Salvador.

In late May, it was the turn of the “right-wing” Christian Democrats. Consciously imitating the Second International event held two months before, the American Enterprise Institute and the West German Christian Democratic think tank, the Konrad Adenauer Institute, brought in luminaries from Latin America and Europe for in-depth discussions on Central America and the Caribbean with U.S. policy-makers in Washington.

Though members of the U.S. National Security Council and the State Department policy planning staffs were present, the primary purpose was to bring the Christian Democratic leaders into contact with Reagan’s Latin American policy group, and shape Reagan’s policy accordingly. Reagan advisers Pedro Sanjuan and Constantine Menges organized the affair; and Richard V. Allen and Menges made the keynote presentations.

A central figure in the meeting was Antonio Morales Erlich, one of the two Christian Democratic figures in the five-man Salvadorean Junta at the time.

Aristides Calvani, former foreign minister of Venezuela and president of the Latin American chapter of the Christian Democrat movement, launched a vitriolic attack on Mexico for allegedly helping the “left and revo-

lutionary movements” in Central America. Menges backed up the charge: López Portillo was “attempting to outdo Fidel Castro,” he claimed.

Later in the summer, Menges flew to Europe for extended strategy sessions with Adenauer Foundation-linked circles in West Germany.

The next continental strategy summit was that of the “liberationist” Church. At the early August assembly of the Theology of the Americas project held in Detroit, Michigan, support for the Jesuit-directed “left” Church movements of Central America was a central focus for action programs throughout the continent. The U.S. campaign culminated in a strong condemnation of the Salvadorean government by the U.S. Council of Bishops a few months later.

The pace of events picked up rapidly with the election of Ronald Reagan Nov. 4.

In an attempt to force Reagan’s hand in their direction, right-wing death squads, under international Christian Democratic direction, stepped up the rate of kidnappings and murders of political opponents.

Meeting in Madrid in mid-November for a specially convoked conference on the other side, the Socialist International established a “Committee for the Defense of the Revolution in Nicaragua” as a front for region-wide deployments. The all-star cast on this committee included Brandt; Michael Harrington of the U.S. Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee; Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky; former Jamaican Prime Minister Michael Manley; French Socialist Party Chairman François Mitterrand; French Socialist leader Michel Rocard; former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme; Dominican Republic social democrat Francisco Peña Gómez; and former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez. The chairman of the committee was Felipe González, head of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE).

**Week of Nov. 24.** A “Private Enterprise Steering Group” of Salvadorean rightists met in Washington with top Reagan Latin American advisers Constantine Menges, Jeane Kirkpatrick, James Theberge, and Roger Fontaine. A spokesman for the Salvadorean group stated afterwards that it had received promises of Reagan administration military support against the insurgents.

**Nov. 27.** In a dramatic escalation, right-wing death squads, with the clear complicity of government security forces, kidnapped six leaders of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) opposition umbrella organization

as they were meeting in the Jesuit Legal Aid office of San Salvador. They were found murdered the next day. Colonel Adolfo Majano, known as the most liberal of the Junta members, fled the country.

**Dec. 4.** Felipe González set out on a key coordinating mission. He met with Fidel Castro at dawn in Havana to discuss "such issues as the Central American situation." González proceeded to Panama that afternoon for extended private meetings at the home of Panamanian strongman Omar Torrijos, with Colonel Majano and other Salvadorean insurgents, representatives of the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, and the liberal Christian Democratic Foreign Minister of El Salvador, Fidel Chávez Mena.

At the airport, González said he had come because Panama is "a center of information . . . particularly regarding the Central American isthmus."

Escalating the provocation from their side, right-wing elements abducted and murdered four American missionaries outside San Salvador. The next day the United States temporarily suspended aid.

**Dec. 5.** González flew to Washington. He briefed the Committee for the Defense of Nicaragua, gathered for a giant conference on "Eurosocialism and America," on his consultations with Castro and the Salvadorean leaders. The issue of Nicaragua was barely mentioned; press accounts stated that the meeting was "to study the Salvadorean situation."

**Dec. 6.** The Eurosocialism conference moved into high gear, with González, Brandt, Palme, Harrington, Mitterrand, and Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Father Miguel D'Escoto all playing prominent roles. Palme told a Mexican newspaper that the "Salvadorean government must be based on the FDR."

**Dec. 7.** Willy Brandt was asked on the U.S. television program "Face the Nation" if he supported a "social-democratic policy" of sending money to El Salvador, "even though some of it goes to arming the guerrillas." "Yes," he responded; "and I speak for the Socialist International."

**Dec. 7.** U.S. emissaries William D. Rogers and William Bowdler left for a "fact-finding mission" to El Salvador to investigate the deaths of the nuns and to demand restructuring of the government. At the end of the week, Christian Democratic Junta member José Napoleón Duarte was named president, and the other members of the Junta downgraded.

**Dec. 7.** Majano returned to El Salvador after two additional days of meetings in Panama. He began discussions with opposition figures, and soon went into hiding.

**Dec. 7.** Felipe González, in his plenary speech to the Eurosoci-alist strategy session in Washington, made it clear that the Second International was turning up its pressure to force Mexico to join the "left" side of the fray. "The Second International asks itself what Mexico's role in Central America will be. This could be

decisive."

The same day, the Social Democratic Foreign Minister of Denmark, Kjell Olenson, finished talks in Mexico. The Salvadorean Junta "has no equal in modern history" for the practice of genocide, he declared; it is a "criminal act" to support such a government. "I have similar points of view to Jorge Castañeda," Olenson added, referring to the Mexican foreign minister.

**Dec. 8.** The Socialist International began to fan back out through Latin America to deliver the marching orders established in Washington. Francisco Peña Gómez, Dominican social-democratic leader, flew from Washington to a series of new meetings at Torrijos's home in Panama with Venezuela's Carlos Andrés Pérez and former Bolivian President Hernán Siles Suazo.

**Dec. 8.** A three-day conference on European-Latin American relations sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation opened in Caracas. Numerous members of *both* Christian Democrat and Social Democrat factions were present. The conference was closed by Carlos Andrés Pérez, returned from his talks in Panama.

**Dec. 9.** Willy Brandt's personal secretary, Klaus Lindenburg, was dispatched from the Washington meeting to Mexico, where he coordinated a three-day conference on North-South issues cosponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the think tank of the ruling PRI party, IEPES. The backroom discussions focused on efforts to align the PRI with the Social Democracy.

Mexico kept its distance. Though PRI President Carrvajal indicated affinity for the Socialist International, he was forced by opposition in his ranks to declare that the PRI "is prevented by statute" from joining.

The semi-official government daily, *El Nacional* cut through the wave of proguerrilla propaganda being mounted in Mexico's vociferous left-Jesuit press. It pointedly wondered whether the Junta had simply made an error by not more effectively preventing the deaths of the U.S. missionaries, or whether it had fallen into a trap designed to justify foreign intervention.

**Dec. 14.** Acción Comunitaria, a group founded by the Mexican affiliates of the Christian Democracy, announced that it was changing its name to become the "Mexican Social Democratic Party." Its platform is support for "anti-imperialist" liberation struggles.

**Dec. 15.** Mexican Foreign Minister Castañeda granted an exclusive interview to Mexico's Jesuit-controlled left newsweekly, *Proceso*. In defiance of López Portillo's policy, he stated that Mexico had already decided to break relations with El Salvador, and was only awaiting a certain degree of territorial control by the guerrillas to make the announcement.

**Dec. 17.** Fidel Castro, in his opening speech to the Second Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, warmly praised the Socialist International's work in Latin America. The final resolutions of the conference Dec. 20 called for "joint action" with the "progressive elements"

of the Church, particularly in “Nicaragua and El Salvador.”

The Congress was the occasion for a steady stream of Salvadorean, Guatemalan, and Nicaraguan guerrillas to be feted by the 2,000 delegates and 34 foreign delegations.

**Dec. 17.** The “liberationist” wing of the Salvadorean Church, through Archdiocesan spokesman Roberto Cuéllar, issued an open call for rebellion. “[The Church] sanctions the legitimacy of insurrection as the supreme recourse of popular defense” in the face of tyranny, he told the press.

A week earlier, “liberationist” Archbishop Marcos McGrath of Panama had directed an international communiqué commencing: “To the present government of El Salvador, we direct our clear, vigorous, and, in the name of God, threatening words.”

**Dec. 23.** Amid increasing rumors that the “final offensive” of the Salvadorean guerrillas would be due Dec. 26, Salvadorean Archbishop Rivera y Damas gave the green light from the Church for the strategy of establishing enclaves of “rebel territory.” The Church will “recognize the constituted power” on a parish-by-parish basis, he announced. Strong messages of support for the Salvadorean Church arrived from the Mexican Episcopal Council and the U.S. Council of Bishops.

**Dec. 26.** The guerrilla offensive began. The *New York Times* made arrangements to broadcast the statements of guerrilla leader, Fermín Cienfuegos worldwide: “The situation in El Salvador will be red hot by the time Mr. Reagan arrives.”

## Nicaragua’s ordeal: eyewitness account

A highly reliable source on friendly terms with the current Nicaraguan government recently returned from a visit to that country and reported the following developments.

The consolidated policy now in place in Nicaragua is one of accelerating economic devolution into a Kampuchea-style Dark Age. Many factories are run on a daily basis by armed teenage “political commissars,” who use their vested authority to override decisions made by experienced plant managers and technicians. In many cases there are KGB-linked Cuban and Soviet advisers performing similar roles.

One specific anecdote is exemplary. A respected Nicaraguan medical doctor who was to deliver a technical scientific paper to a group of students was told that he

would have to submit his presentation for political screening by a Soviet “commissar.” Then, in the course of his talk, he showed photographs of advanced American medical equipment, only to be interrupted by the Soviet, who informed the group that this was “imperialist technology.”

Not surprisingly, such policies are leading to a situation of economic chaos. And no one is seriously mobilizing the population behind development or reconstruction tasks.

Although the July 1979 Sandinista revolution included a thrust toward the industrial development of Nicaragua—and viewed the ouster of the drug-running Somoza dictatorship as a first step in that direction—the current situation indicates that the Jesuit Dark Ages faction now enjoys total hegemony and has the country locked into an antiscience, Jacobin course.

A crucial consolidation point was the late 1979 “literacy campaign,” run by the country’s leading Jesuit, Father Fernando Cardenal, S.J., the brother of the better known (but less influential) Nicaragua Culture Minister, Ernesto Cardenal. The campaign, under which thousands of Cuban volunteer teachers have traveled to Nicaragua to aid in the project, was based on the method developed by Paulo Freire, a renowned “Third Worldist” pedagogue who has close links to Liberation Theology Church networks. Best known for proposing “deschooling” and other antidevelopment brainwashing techniques, Freire’s sponsors include the Club of Rome and UNESCO. Prior to Nicaragua, his main guinea pig was Guinea Bissau.

The same Jacobin bias is evident in the day-to-day management of the state. The latest fashion among government officials and employees is to wear dirty shirts on the job—perhaps to prove their proletarian roots.

The person with greatest power in Nicaragua is Interior Minister Tomás Borge—an individual generally recognized as “Havana’s man” on the scene. There are nominally three distinct governing bodies in the country—the five-man Junta; the parliament-like State Council; and the nine-member Sandinista National Directorate—but in point of fact, it is the Sandinista Directorate which runs the country. It consists of three representatives of each of the three currents within Sandinismo, and Borge is the strong-man within this grouping. Through this arrangement, our source reports, Borge systematically overrides Junta members like Sergio Ramírez, who otherwise object to features of the ultraradical, antiscientific approach that is dominant.

Borge is also in charge of internal and state security, and has placed the leading members of the government under close surveillance. To keep control over the armed forces, the government keeps them constantly on edge over real and feigned “foreign attacks” and “bat-