

1. The United States government is on the verge of launching a major war in Central America. The next two to three months are the decisive turning point in which the direction of policy will be determined. During this period, especially immediately after the Salvadoran "elections" exercise, U.S. imperialism has two options: (a) an open-ended and essentially unlimited military commitment to the Salvadoran junta, leading inevitably to the introduction of substantial foreign troops (Argentinean, Chilean, possibly Honduran) and the takeover of the Salvadoran officer corps by several hundred U.S. officers masquerading as "advisers;" removal of restraints on aid to the Guatemalan dictatorship; a large-scale counter-revolutionary war of attrition or even, as an outside chance, a direct invasion of Nicaragua; or (b) accepting negotiations with the Salvadoran popular revolutionary forces in the context of the Mexican "Caribbean peace plan;" continuing pressure on Nicaragua but with the aim of blackmailing it to withdraw support from the Salvadorans rather than trying (at this stage) to overthrow the FSLN; hoping in this way to break up the Salvadoran popular forces' unity and preserve the right-wing Salvadoran military apparatus for future use.

Of these, option (b) is by far the more rational; however, in the context of a general ideological crisis of the right caused by the failures of Reaganomics, etc., option (a) is a real and frightening possibility.

It should be noted that option (a) leads inexorably toward all-out regional war, for the following reason: any effective counter-insurgency in El Salvador, i.e. massive enough intervention to "secure" the cities and deprive the FDR/FMLN of secure rural strongholds -- through search-and-destroy, napalming villages, etc. -- would force the FMLN to establish bases instead in Honduras and Guatemala, directly linking up with insurgent forces inside those countries and effectively erasing all borders. A serious military effort to overthrow the Nicaraguan government would have similar results. The situation of full-scale regional war would make direct and large-scale U.S. intervention increasingly unavoidable, with incalculable consequences.

2. Whether imperialism chooses option (a) or (b), a massive anti-war movement in the U.S. is desperately needed. Its demands and strategies should be clear: U.S. out of Central America, no support to the dictatorships; mobilize on campuses, in the unions and the churches for every form of visible opposition to U.S. intervention.

Fortunately, such a movement exists. It is multi-centered, ranging from the established leadership of many churches, to traditional peace groups like the Nobe, left front groups such as PAI/APC, and locally based Latin America solidarity groups of various kinds. However, the movement does have a visible and dynamic left-wing center at the present time, the U.S. Committee in Solidarity With the People of El Salvador (CISPES). With hundreds of chapters, with the potential to build at least as many new ones, as the center of a broad coalition organizing actions like the March 27 mobilization in Washington against the U.S. war in El Salvador, and with effective working relations with representatives of the FDR, CISPES may already be more important than any particular organizing center during the anti-Vietnam war movement. (Leaving aside the unique phenomenon of SDS).

3. Two significant potential political pitfalls may face the anti-intervention movement in the short-term future: the danger of a opting a "negotiations" instead of "withdrawal" position, and (related) the danger of being captured by Congressional Democrats who are rapidly coming out against the Reagan policy.

Both these potential pitfalls can be avoided if the movement continues to focus on building mass actions. While the FDR/FMLN as representatives of the Salvadoran people have every right to demand negotiations, it is up to their

North American allies to be sure that the anti-intervention movement does not become demobilized if the U.S. government opts for policy (b) as outlined above. This can only be done by consistently educating and organizing around all forms of intervention. The same stance will ensure the movement's independence of the Congressional types (who in essence constitute a liberal/pragmatic lobby for option (b), even though their present opposition to the disastrous logic of the Reagan policy is tactically useful). In any case the liberal-electoral trap is far less serious in a non-Presidential election year than it will be in 1984.

At the same time, in certain crucial respects this new movement is already more mature and serious than the last one. Ultraleftism -- the kind of pick-up-the-gun-now rhetoric that helped wreck the '60s movement -- has not surfaced. The movement today is also more conscious in organically linking issues of intervention abroad and the social-economic crisis at home. No one has put forward the kind of "single-issue anti-war movement" formulas that served as a conservatizing drag on the anti-war mobilizations of the late 1960s.

4. In addition to the anti-intervention, Central American solidarity front, there is another important front of the new anti-war struggle: that is, the movement for nuclear disarmament inspired in part by the European example. Toward this movement, we should present the idea of the demand for unilateral disarmament, without pro-Stalinist or pacifist illusions. (See Changes, March 1982 review of Protest and Survive for a summary of this position). The conference sponsored by the NY Solidarity Support Campaign (April 17), bringing together support of Polish Solidarity, disarmament and El Salvador, is an exemplary way of raising a revolutionary third-camp approach. For reasons argued in a supplementary resolution to this document, we feel that in most places I.S. resources should be placed more into the Central America solidarity component of the broader anti-war struggle.

5. The I.S. needs to develop informed, critical analysis of the revolutionary movements in Central America. The complexity of issues posed by the differing strategic and tactical orientations of differing groups in the revolutionary fronts, the paucity of reliable information on workers' struggles, etc., are such that this will require at least a couple of comrades fluent in Spanish to become Central America experts for the I.S. Reliance on English language sources makes it impossible to sort out hard facts from the ideological predilections of whoever did the writing....

The following are the very rough framework within which detailed and concrete analyses must be developed:

(i) the victory of the revolutionary movements in Central America, FSLN, FDR/FILN, CGUP (Guatemala), etc. is the pre-condition for overcoming the imperialist-enforced backwardness, poverty and oppression suffered by the peoples of that region.

(ii) we must be unconditional supporters of these revolutionary movements, especially the Nicaraguan revolution, against imperialism while remaining principled defenders of workers' democracy in Nicaragua (e.g. trade union rights) even where this position is unpopular in the movement.

(iii) efforts at organizing urban-based and working class movements have been strongest in Guatemala, less so, although significant in El Salvador and least (up to the victory in 1979) in Nicaragua, and are now hampered by terroristic repression by the Salvadoran and Guatemalan regimes.

(iv) we must pay careful attention to a very rapidly changing situation, especially the maneuvers of the Mexican government, in which the options to be chosen by the U.S. for all-out war or negotiations will be determined; always keeping in mind that our opposition to U.S. intervention in any form is complete and unconditional.

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