

CENTRAL AMERICA

Right-left setup for Reagan on Mexico's southern border

by Dennis Small

On Thanksgiving Day five of the top six leaders of the El Salvadorean political left were kidnapped by 200 soldiers and plainclothes thugs. The next morning their mutilated bodies were found strewn around the capital.

In the wake of the assassinations Salvador's left has promised a full-scale insurrection against the Christian Democratic military junta that governs the country. And the right has vowed to eliminate the entire left and opposition leadership—*before* Ronald Reagan enters the White House on Jan. 20 1981. In a major escalation two days ago, three American nuns and one layman were abducted, raped, and murdered in San Salvador—presumably by an ultra-right death squad.

The murders and ensuing violence have succeeded in knocking out the last possibility of national reconciliation between Salvador's "right" and "left" guaranteeing a civil war which will quickly spread throughout the region.

More strategically significant than the bloodshed and spreading violence, however, is the prospect that the United States and Mexico might be drawn into *opposing sides* of the Salvadorean civil war and could even end up as direct military antagonists in the Central American theater.

In fact the Salvadorean civil war is being triggered in large measure to achieve exactly that strategic goal: to bog down the incoming Reagan administration in a Vietnam-style war in Central America, a war which would minimally destroy all prospects of positive U.S.-Mexican relations and could conceivably set the two nations directly at each others' throats.

The faction in international politics associated with the New York Council on Foreign Relations and the Washington-based Jesuit Georgetown University is acutely aware that if Reagan reverses the Carter administration's Mexico policy fiasco by offering that country oil-for-technology economic accords, then a model will have been created which could be applied to the North-South crisis as a whole. This anti-growth political grouping watched nervously two weeks ago as French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs M. Olivier Stirn visited Mexican President José López Portillo to propose that France and Mexico collaborate to stabilize Central America and the Caribbean region, and that they estab-

lish high-technology economic agreements in areas such as nuclear energy.

In early November the same no-growth crowd gathered in New Orleans to discuss how to sabotage policies like those put forward by the French government. They held a conference entitled "Energy and Security in the Caribbean Basin" sponsored by the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). One well-informed source suggested to *EIR* that the current wave of Central American violence might well have been pre-planned at this Jesuit-run conference, given the presence of policy heavyweights like Henry Kissinger; David Abshire (head of Georgetown CSIS); Father Robert Henle, S.J. (president of the University of St. Louis); and Ambassador Robert Kreuger (Special Coordinator for U.S.-Mexico Affairs).

Right vs. left Jesuits

The Jesuit connection is most relevant for the Salvadorean case. For the harsh fact of the matter is that El Salvador's civil war is a bloody farce where *both* sides in that battle—which has claimed upwards of 9300 victims so far this year—are politically controlled by the Jesuits.

The Salvadorean junta is run by two of its five members who are top leaders of the Christian Democratic party. They are directly linked to "right-wing" Jesuit networks through the international Christian Democracy of which they are part. The Christian Democratic government of Luis Herrera Campins in Venezuela is the immediate channel through which financing and political marching orders for the junta are given.

Ronald Reagan is also being urged to strengthen the hand of these networks. Junta member and top Christian Democrat Napoleón Duarte travelled to the U.S. last week where he met with President Carter and then talked to Reagan's top Latin American advisers—Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Roger Fontaine, Constantine Menges, and James Theberge. Business representatives allied to Duarte grouped in the so-called "Productive Alliance" only days earlier had met with the same advisers and, according to press accounts, extracted from them a commitment to increased military aid for El Salvador under the Reagan administration.

Many of Reagan's top policy advisers—including Fontaine and Theberge on the Latin American side—come from Georgetown University.

In the meantime the Georgetown crowd has totally unleashed Central America's right-wing terrorists and Ronald Reagan is being credited by the international media for the ensuing atrocities. But as one U.S. official quoted in the Nov. 30 *New York Times* put it, "a lot of barbarism is being carried out in Reagan's name of which he could never approve." The problem, according to one high-placed Guatemalan rightist, is that "no one can be sure what policies Reagan will finally adopt toward the region. So the idea is to present him with a fait accompli."

The opposition to the junta grouped in the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) is also run by Jesuits—albeit "leftist" ones. The FDR chiefs who were kidnapped and killed on Thanksgiving were seized when they assembled in a Jesuit school for a press conference. And they too have been receiving scarcely veiled encouragement from the Carter State Department. In fact, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White, in an unabashed effort to fan the flames of civil war, met with Jesuit leaders in the offices of the Catholic secondary school where the murdered leftists were abducted. According to the Nov. 30 *Washington Post*, "White called the killings an 'unspeakable crime' and told the Jesuits, many of whom are closely tied to the left, that 'they do not stand alone.'"

White has gone further. Working with anonymous congressmen and current and former officials at the State Department, the CIA, the Department of Defense, and the National Security Council, White drafted a lengthy "dissenting" policy document on El Salvador which calls for the U.S. government to pull the plug on the junta by recognizing the FDR "as the legitimate political force of El Salvador."

The White paper is designed to encourage the left Jesuits in their suicidal "war of liberation" against the right Jesuit junta.

Another significant feature of the White report is that it attempts to portray Mexico as a fullfledged ally of the FDR and El Salvador's left Jesuits (see excerpts below).

Mexico's role

There is also substantial pressure coming from Mexico's left for the López Portillo government to break diplomatic relations with the junta and give its backing to the FDR or minimally to suspend its oil exports to that country as a sign of protest.

López Portillo, however, seems acutely aware of the trap that is being set. He instructed his Foreign Minister, Jorge Castañeda, to tell the press three times in the past three days that Mexico does *not* plan to either

break relations or use its oil weapon against El Salvador.

On Dec. 1, Mexico's Defense Minister Félix Galván López sent a still stronger signal by announcing the most important military exercises ever in the history of the nation. Five thousand troops will stage three days of maneuvers in Mexico's five southeastern states—the area of Mexico which borders with Central America. The Mexicans have also invited a handful of Guatemalan generals to observe the exercises—to drive the political message home, as well as to prove to them that Mexico is neither harboring nor arming Central American guerrillas as the White report claims.

Especially indicative of the Mexican government's degree of concern is the fact that on Nov. 26, President López Portillo sent a bill to Congress which would amend the Mexican constitution to grant the president sweeping executive powers "in the event of a foreign invasion." As the draft legislation explains this would eliminate the Council of Ministers and grant the president the authority to "suspend in all or parts of the country those guarantees which are an obstacle to the rapid and easy deployment" of the nation to confront any threat to its security.

Is such a threat being placed on Ronald Reagan's agenda?

The following excerpts are translated from a Spanish-language version of the document on El Salvador being circulated in Washington by high-level "dissident" elements of the Carter administration. The Spanish language version appeared in the Mexico City daily Excelsior of Dec. 3, 1980.

The continuing growth of Mexico's economy, its oil wealth, and its internal political stability have increased Mexico's prestige as well as its advantages and capacity to influence developments in Central America and the Caribbean. . . .

The PRI [Mexico's governing political party] would like to limit the internal impact the Central American process could have. . . . The PRI feels that the best way to keep these processes from affecting [Mexico's] internal political stability is by recognizing them. . . .

The PRI maintains cordial relations with and recognizes the legitimacy of the Frente Democrático Revolucionario. . . .

A significant percentage of the arms which reach Guatemala and El Salvador comes from Mexico.

Mexico has already indicated to the United States and Venezuela its opposition should they intervene directly in El Salvador. It has shown it is prepared to mount a diplomatic counteroffensive and could link [the issue] to other types of bilateral affairs of interest to the United States.