

Department, which sees Central America as its most promising continental diversion to the "debt bomb" motion on economic issues otherwise spreading from Argentina to Mexico.

Enter Ríos Montt

Preliminary *EIR* investigations show that something more lies behind the situation than whether or not the U.S. State Department is "sincere" in its sudden dove cooings. The key to it is the State Department's build-up of Guatemalan zombie strongman, Efraín Ríos Montt, as the model for the region.

In Spain, Enders urged the Socialist International to "re-assess" its previous condemnation of the Ríos Montt regime, on the grounds that the general had reduced death squad activity in the cities and was making strides in pacifying the countryside. Two weeks earlier the State Department had presented its "documentation" of the improvement to Congress with great flourish, and two months earlier, had maneuvered President Reagan into sitting down for a slide show

with Ríos Montt, after which Reagan emerged to say that Ríos Montt had been given a "bum rap" on his human rights record by hostile media.

"Born-again Christian" Ríos Montt has been a State Department project at least since Gen. Vernon Walters's "secret" trips to Guatemala in the year before Ríos Montt's March 23, 1982 coup, during which time Haig's emissary let it be known that the United States looked askance at a continuation of the succession of hardline "gorrilla" regimes then represented by the government of Gen. Romeo Lucas García.

The model that the 57-year-old general represents is a Latin-Americanized Pol Pot—nothing surprising, since it was Kissinger's handpicked Thomas Enders who installed Pol Pot in Kampuchea in the 1973-75 period. Ríos Montt's much-touted "guns and beans" program in the largely-Indian countryside is based on first destroying homes and razing crops in areas reportedly infiltrated by guerrillas. In a typical operation, a swath of villages 20 by 40 miles in size north of the mountain center of Chimaltenango is destroyed. Then terror-

Guatemala moves to destabilize Mexico

On Jan. 27, two hundred Guatemalan soldiers in civilian dress crossed into Mexico, hauled out four victims from refugee camps on the Mexican border, and executed them. A fifth refugee was abducted. The incident was the second such blatant incursion in seven months.

Four days later, Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid emerged from an emergency meeting with his foreign, defense, and interior ministers to announce that his nation was issuing what amounts to an ultimatum of three points to Guatemala. The Guatemalans must 1) fully investigate and clarify the incident, 2) provide guarantees that no further incursions occur, and 3) punish those responsible.

The response of Ríos Montt's government so far has been denial of any responsibility for the incursion. The Guatemalan foreign minister, in a letter to the Papal Nuncio in Guatemala, countercharged that Mexico was involved in an "international campaign to destroy the New Society of President Ríos Montt. We have the Truth, and we will make the Truth prevail." Guatemalan Commerce Minister Mathen Duchez stated blithely that the solution was for the estimated 30,000 refugees, most of them fleeing from massacres perpetrated by Ríos Montt's military or the new rural militias, "to simply return to their homes."

The Mexican stance was hardly an overreaction. Such influentials as the British-run Heritage Foundation in Washington, which touts the "enormous good"

now being done by Ríos Montt, have staked their reputations for years on the scenario of Central American violence "spilling over" into Mexico, and especially into the oilfields 150 miles from the border.

The provocations on the border itself are not the only way in which the Ríos Montt threat materializes for Mexico. The economic strain of a total of some 150,000 refugees from all theatres of Central American conflict, spread over many parts of Mexican territory, is that much more difficult to absorb because of the state of collapse of the Mexican economy.

Mexico has also had to fight off a plethora of "humanitarian agencies," which have attempted to usurp Mexican authority over the refugee camps. Many of these agencies are just fronts for intelligence and destabilization activities, especially with a "religious" cover. The Protestant sect which Ríos Montt preaches for in Guatemala, the Church of the Word, first entered Guatemala in 1976 on the coattails of the World Vision fundamentalist relief agency, one of the largest "refugee camp management agencies" in the world, invited in to build housing after the 1976 earthquake.

Well aware of the danger, de la Madrid flatly turned down U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) Paul Hartling when he requested that private agencies be given free run of the refugee camps. A petulant Hartling called a press conference Feb. 3 before returning to Europe, where he lamented that Mexico "had opted, for the moment," to work only with the UNHCR itself, "without the participation of other voluntary, religious, or humanitarian agencies," whose aid "we have found very satisfactory" in the past.