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## Central America

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# Will Kissinger's war plan prevail?

by Cynthia Rush

Throughout most of 1984, the dominant influence in the Reagan administration's policy toward Central America has been the report issued by Henry Kissinger's Bipartisan Commission on Central America. Released on Jan. 11, 1984, the report has nothing to do with defending U.S. national security interests; instead, it encouraged actions in Central America that could only accelerate the process of decoupling Europe from the United States while embroiling America in a Vietnam-like mess from which it could not extricate itself.

The Kissinger Commission report called for restructuring Central America's economies in such a way as to foster the production and trafficking of drugs, using the model of such "free enterprise" economies as those of Hong Kong and Singapore; it backed Malthusian population-reduction programs, asserting that overpopulation is the root cause of economic misery in the region; and it espoused growing regional warfare modeled on Europe's Thirty Years War. Teddy Roosevelt's "gunboat diplomacy" was cited as the model for increased U.S. military intervention.

But Henry's friends in the State Department could only make headway with his policy if at the same time they stomped on the independent peacemaking initiatives of the Contadora Group, whose four members are Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, and Colombia. Kissinger didn't take kindly to direct attacks on his commission's report by the Presidents of Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico or to their repeated calls for President Reagan to approach the region with a program of aggressive economic and infrastructural development. Any U.S. "military option," for the region would carry "incalculable risks" and "unforeseen consequences," the Contadora leaders warned.

For months, Contadora's efforts had centered on getting the nations of Central America, *including Nicaragua*, to sign a second version of a peace treaty which called for "the cessation of hostilities, and of belligerent acts or preparation for war, arms restraint, a commitment of all of the countries in the region not to support subversion or destabilization of neighbors, and withdrawal of foreign military forces." The State Department mouthed official support for the group's

efforts until mid-October, when Nicaragua and four other Central American countries announced they would shortly sign the treaty. State went haywire. Within days, its crude blackmail and armtwisting tactics got four of the nations to raise "objections" to the treaty and back down on signing. Only Guatemala stuck to its original commitment.

The centerpiece of Kissinger's strategy is to unleash enough chaos in the region to justify pulling American troops out of Europe for redeployment into Central America. Mexico is an important part of the strategy because of its shared border with the United States. From the south, Mexico's stability has been continuously threatened by existing insurgencies and reports of U.S. military invasion, which has tended to send an increasing flow of refugees northward. But the State Department escalated the threat by publicly backing the activities of Mexico's neo-Nazi PAN, a drug-linked party which has vowed to unleash violence and civil war inside the country unless allowed to participate in the government. Any upheaval in Mexico, provoked by internal or external causes, would provide the Kissinger racists with a pretext for redeploying American troops to Mexico or elsewhere in the region to defend the U.S.-Mexican border from "brown hordes" of fleeing refugees.

### A U.S. invasion?

In October and early November, Central America came close to exploding in the way that the State Department desires. The Nicaraguan government warned repeatedly of an imminent U.S. military invasion, placing its population and armed forces on a total war footing. While the State Department's "roving ambassador" Vernon Walters, a key proponent of decoupling, publicly advocated deploying U.S. troops from Europe to Central America as evidence of a "no-nonsense" policy toward the Soviets, the Socialist International's Willy Brandt shrieked from the "left" that any U.S. incursion into the region would result in an "anti-American" backlash throughout Europe. Beginning on the day of the U.S. elections, Nov. 6, and in the week following, reports that Soviet ships heading toward Managua were carrying MiGs raised expectations of an imminent U.S. military intervention. But neither the MiGs nor the invasion materialized.

Signs of a shift in policy did appear in Washington, at the end of November, reflecting the fierce factional battle over the Strategic Defense Initiative. In a Nov. 28 speech at the National Press Club, Defense Secretary Weinberger attacked those "theorists" who "argue that military force can be brought to bear in any crisis," warning that "the President will not allow our military forces to creep—or be drawn gradually—into a combat role in Central America or any other place in the world." But only if these echoes of the "LaRouche doctrine" (see p. 4) are followed up with a dramatic shift in economic policy, dumping the International Monetary Fund and its State Department backers, will there be a chance of real peace in Central America.