
CENTRAL AMERICA

'Zimbabwe solution' posed for El Salvador

by Gretchen Small

A behind-the-scenes look at Secretary of State Alexander Haig's policy toward El Salvador and Central America, as it emerged during the past few weeks, was a shocker for Americans who expected a change from the new administration toward the region. While Haig expostulated about tough military action, two State Department envoys, sent expressly by Haig, were meeting with the Socialist International leadership in Sweden and Panama to map out a strategy toward Salvador, promising full U.S. cooperation with the agencies involved in fomenting the crisis in the first place.

The Socialist International had just modified its tactics toward the region, and called for Socialist International head Willy Brandt to meet with President Reagan to mediate a solution to the crisis, a decision taken at an emergency meeting of the Latin American branch of the organization convened in Panama at the beginning of the month to discuss El Salvador. In December, Willy Brandt went before American TV to defend the International's policy of arming and financing the opposition forces for their "final offensive"!

The following day, Sen. Ted Kennedy joined the new mediation bandwagon. In a noon release, Kennedy called on the administration to follow the British model for crises—the so-called Zimbabwe solution. An in-place truce must be declared in El Salvador, Kennedy's statement read, and an "all parties conference" convened on the model of the "Lancaster House discussions" that led to the British-run settlement of the Rhodesian crisis.

A British-modeled "Zimbabwe solution" run by the Socialist International—the deployment-level agency behind the guerrillas in El Salvador—is *not* designed as a peace-keeping solution. A real settlement would require the injection of well-planned economic aid to El Salvador and to the entire region, to establish a base for industrial development. Willy Brandt, the chairman of the World Bank subgroup called the Brandt Commission, not only opposed industrial development for the Third World as an "attack" on "natural lifestyles," but explicitly advocates a global depopulation strategy.

Behind Haig's Carter-style duplicity in foreign policy are new maneuvers to bolster the "centrist" image of the

junta in preparation for a new round of bloodbaths, this time unleashed from the military and right-wing ultras. Sources close to the Salvadorean situation are predicting resumption of full-scale fighting there between now and May, triggered by a stepped-up right-wing offensive by the forces around Major Roberto D'Abuisson.

Haig's Socialist allies

Brandt's grandstand play as peace-maker in fact was quickly arranged, with Haig's help, in response to signs that an effort by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's West German government to negotiate a real settlement might catch hold. Spokesmen for the Bonn government had stepped forward to offer their auspices for negotiating a political solution when Haig's demands for a military solution and cold war confrontation over El Salvador had met with near universal hostility in Europe and Latin America.

But when Bonn stepped forward, Haig's emissaries twisted arms, sources in Bonn reported, and both opposition leader Guillermo Ungo and junta leader José Duarte came out against Bonn's proposed talks. When Brandt's offer was made three days later, they both quickly reversed themselves, and decided to talk!

Haig made it clear just whom he would talk with. General Vernon Walters, Haig's envoy to Latin America who had stopped in four Latin American countries to deliver the message that the United States foresaw a "temporary military solution" to El Salvador's problems, arrived in Panama in early March to meet with the Social Democrats. Emerging from his "cordial talks" with Peña Gomez from the Dominican Republic and Venezuela's Carlos Andrés Pérez, both supporters of the left in El Salvador, Walters told the press that he had conveyed to the Socialists the administration's interest in negotiations.

Herman Cohen, the State Department envoy to Sweden, told the Swedish socialists at the time of Walters's arrival that "if their attempt to mediate can open a dialogue between the democratic forces in El Salvador, then of course it's good," the Swedish press reported. Piere Schori, the Swedish Socialists' Latin American coordinator, called Cohen's remarks a "statement that I regard as a clear success for us."

In honor of the talks' "success," Schori canceled his scheduled appearance at the Social Democrats' demonstration outside the American embassy that night!

Neither Walters nor Cohen's remarks were given much attention in the U.S. media—busy playing up the hardline talk coming out of Washington for American consumption. But Haig's deal with the Socialists, run simultaneously as he increased U.S. military involvement in the no-win conflict, seems to give the lie to his pretensions to be achieving peace in the area.