ORGANIZING FOR RESISTANCE

Historical and Theological Reflections and Organizing

Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America
407 S. Dearborn Street - # 370
Chicago, Illinois 60605
663-4398
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INTRODUCTION

- Fernando, campesino from Nicaragua -

We have learned much from our sisters and brothers in Central America. In their struggle for life they have given us the flesh and blood of heroism and commitment. They have lived the meaning of resistance. Their attitude has changed from fatalism and acceptance of the world as it is to responsibility for changing it. They are no longer passive recipients but active agents making history. This transformation has meant overcoming apathy and docility while embracing risk as the only bridge to a new justice.

What they have done, we must now do.

In that process a significant part of the church has turned from blessing the status quo to joining with the poor to organize for liberation. The base Christian communities have played a crucial role in the Central American struggle just as a new awakening of activism is beginning in the North American church. For that reason some of the articles in this manual are directed at a religious constituency. These reflections are not intended as a kind of religious imperialism which commands the moral ground of action, but simply as a reflection of a rich history of religious resistance. Nicaraguan theologian Juan Pico states that those who are faithful to the God of history may be those whose motivating convictions stand outside religious categories. He stated:

(In the revolutionary process) seeing people die for others and not hearing them talk about faith in God being the motivating factor, liberates Christians from the prejudice of trying to encounter true love solely and exclusively within the boundaries of faith. It also helps to free them from the temptation of not considering a revolutionary process authentic unless it has the label "Christian".

Within the pledge of resistance movement there cannot be division between believers and non-believers. The only division that is significant is between those who act and those who do not, those who seek life by whatever name and those who collude with death.

From the real freedom fighters of Central America we are learning in theory and practice the meaning of unity, solidarity, and hope.

UNITY — Labor unions, revolutionary parties, Christian groups, women's organizations are all forging a unity based on despising injustice and seeking a new society. Their unity is fragile and tenuous at times and must be worked at every day. But they have rejected the superficial sameness of the least common denominator in favor of a deeper unity wrought of dialogue and criticism.

SOLIDARITY — They have taught us that solidarity is not some distant charity but an embrace, which means suffering some of the pain intended for the oppressed. If the police or the courts are rough with demonstrators here it is only the same treatment that the poor and minorities have always received from those in power. Solidarity is born of daring a sacrifice and is the sign of authentic sisterhood and brotherhood. Again it is the Central Americans who have shown the way. They continually renounce their own
personal safety for the sake of others. Relatives of the disappeared in Guatemala and El Salvador march past the barrels of machine guns. People sign newspaper ads protesting government human rights abuses when they know their names will go on death squad lists. Groups continue to meet when such meetings are outlawed. Workers strike, young people operate safe houses and students build barricades all for the sake of solidarity.

Solidarity is difficult in the United States, not because of the distance but because safety is always at our fingertips. All we have to do is remain silent or cooperate with the authorities. Turn away or equivocate. Just send money or say we don't have enough information yet.

Betrayal wears a thousand masks.

Solidarity means refusing to hide.

HOPE — But the most empowering example of the struggle in Central America has been their sense of hope even in the midst of atrocity.

In a Salvadoran refugee camp one day the National Guard came to take away Alfredo to force him to serve in the army. On this day the mothers decided to try and save Alfredo. They linked arms and formed a circle around him. The National Guardsmen took their rifles and beat the women to the ground. But their example had been so courageous and hopeful that their children stood in their places and linked arms around Alfredo. And on that day even the ruthless National Guard did not beat the children. They turned and left and Alfredo was saved.

The people of Central America are keeping hope alive. That is why thousands of people from all over this country are taking risks to be in solidarity with the people of Central America. It is why thousands of people have signed the Pledge of Resistance and are taking part in demonstrations involving civil disobedience. It is why the Sanctuary Movement is constantly growing inspite of indictments and government harrassment.

This manual is a beginning — one way of keeping hope alive. In it are concrete ways we can link arms in resistance to the armed forces of this nation. It urges us to create a common we that cries out Basta, Enough!

Whether hope lives and the people of Central America survive depends on all of us. Resistance is simply making love effective and justice real.
HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE

Why do we obey?

To whom or to what do we owe our ultimate allegiance?

How we answer those questions will determine to a large part how we live our lives and what forms our resistance to injustice will take.

When considering civil disobedience it is important to understand the theory and rich history of direct action. The following are a few brief points that help to put our present day actions into perspective.

1. All those who govern derive their power from the consent of the governed. Obedience is at the heart of political power. This is true whether the government is a dictatorship or a form of democracy. Those in power depend upon the submission or consent of the citizenry which can be achieved through terror, subtle forms of manipulation, or agreement.

2. People can withdraw their consent. Obedience is not inevitable. History is filled with examples of people organizing to challenge the existing law and government, committing acts of civil disobedience for the sake of justice and the higher moral good. During the Second World War when the Nazi forces occupied Norway they told the Norwegian teachers that they had to teach Nazism in the schools. The teachers refused and the men were put into concentration camps in the brutally cold north where they endured starvation, cold and torture. They never gave in and their witness empowered the whole Norwegian population. The Nazi regime finally allowed them to return to their homes and teach whatever they wanted.

3. It is not punishment that keeps people obedient but fear of punishment. Intimidation is often the first line of defense for those in power. Intimidation works to the extent that it invokes fear in the populace. Resistance to unjust law and authority depends upon overcoming-personal fears. The non-violent resister is more concerned about about what will happen to the oppressed if the unjust situation continues than what will happen to her/him in the process of changing it. Thus, the non-violent resister becomes engaged in changing history by overcoming fear, apathy and neutrality. Even Nazi Germany, ruled with Gestapo forces in the streets, did not intimidate the wives of approximately 600 men who were arrested in one of the last round ups of Jews. The women refused to just remain in their homes and wait. They went to the square in front of where the men were being jailed. They protested and waved to the men calling upon the Gestapo to free them. Machine gun fire could have killed every protester in the square. They persisted and the Nazis released the men. This example is not to say that Hitler could have been overthrown by totally non-violent actions. It does point, though, to the importance of refusing to allow our fears to immobilize us in the face of greater physical power.

4. Humanity has only progressed through conflict and struggle. Most of the civil rights we enjoy today were not handed down by the founders of our country but were fought for and won through acts of protest and resistance. The eight-hour day, minimum wage, the right to organize and bargain collectively, worker's compensation, civil rights for blacks, voting rights for women were all won in the streets long before Congress enacted them into law.

Frederick Douglas said, "The whole history of the progress of human liberty shows that all concessions yet made to her august claims have been born of struggle. If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are those who want crops without plowing up the ground. The struggle may be a physical one or a moral one or
a moral one or both, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

5. **Law is a human construct.** Those in power want us to consider law as sacred and inviolate. But law is human and subject to the race, class and sex biases prevalent in the culture. At their best laws seek to serve justice, at their worst they serve the narrow interests of wealthy elites. We only have to look at the composition of the U.S. Senate which is all white and almost all male, many of whom are millionaires, to see that some groups are more represented than others.

To hold up law as sacred is idolatry. Justice is sacred but not law. When law does not serve justice, law should be disobeyed. Henry David wrote not only of the right of civil disobedience but its duty. His famous tax protest was occasioned by the Mexican War, one of the first U.S. wars of empire building.

At the Nuremberg Trials, the International Tribunal said that Adolf Eichmann and other Nazi war criminals could not use the defense that they were only obeying orders. They stated that individuals must use their own consciences in deciding whether to obey superiors.

Laws are constantly changing and being interpreted. Every day lawyers carry an armload of briefs into court to argue a favorable interpretation of a law for their client. Historically unjust laws have been changed through direct action not legislation.

— It was once legal to own slaves and those who harbored runaways were considered criminals prosecuted under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.
— It was once legal to keep women from voting.
— It was once perfectly legal to keep blacks in the back of the bus and refuse to serve them at lunch counters.

Organized resistance and civil disobedience changed those laws, even though those in authority arrested activist leaders and participants. Alice Paul and other leaders of the Women’s Movement in the early 1900’s picketed the White House (which was illegal at the time), were arrested, went on hunger strikes in Washington D.C. prisons and were forced fed by the jail guards. Soon after their militancy Congress passed the Constitutional Amendment granting women the right to vote. Some considered their actions too militant and that they would alienate those who they were trying to persuade but just the opposite happened.

There are many claims on our life — family, work, personal needs. What claims our life at its deepest level will determine who or what we obey and to whom or what we will ultimately pay allegiance. Moral claims may take a variety of forms — a commitment to justice, the common good, life, the people of Central America, God. How clear we are about those ideals and how well we integrate them into our lives will determine what form our resistance will take.

People can claim history. We often believe it is the domain of presidents, kings and statesman because that is what we were taught. But there is a hidden history of people organizing and taking control of their lives and their culture. As Howard Zinn writes, "If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past it should...emphasize new possibilities by disclosing hidden episodes of the past when, even in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, join together, occasionally to win."

This is again a time when people are showing their willingness to resist, join together and make history.
"From the depths of the countries that make up Latin America a cry is rising to heaven, growing louder and more alarming all the time. It is a cry of a suffering people who demand justice, freedom and respect for the basic rights of human beings and people."

- Puebla 1979 -

The cry of the people of Central America has laid a moral claim on the lives of the people of conscience of North America. The church of the poor of Central America has committed itself to the liberation of the majority from bondage to "institutionalized violence," the concentration of the wealth in the hands of the few and the denial of basic human and economic rights of the majority.

A long list of martyrs have spread hope in the barrios and villages as pictures of Rotilio Grande and Oscar Romero fill the homes of the poor. The mothers and relatives of the disappeared are becoming more militant in their demand for justice both in Guatemala and El Salvador at great risk to their own lives. Much has been given by the people and they know more will be demanded if justice is to triumph. The same necessity for increased commitment is making its way north. More is demanded of us.

As the times become more dangerous both from internal repression and from further U.S. military intervention in Central America, it becomes clearer that greater resistance on the part of the people of the United States is necessary. Resistance will be more determined and prolonged if it is grounded in a theological and spiritual understanding of resistance.

The faith stories of the Old Testament, the life and ministry of Jesus and the building of the early church form a thick weave of resistance and solidarity. The following are some of the themes that, taken together, form a theology of resistance.

**Exodus: Resistance and Solidarity**

The Hebrew exodus from Egypt is the central faith event of the Judeo-Christian understanding of God and history. It became the basis of the covenant relationship between God and people and defined the terms of that divine/human solidarity.

The major elements of the exodus story are:

1) A struggle between oppressed and oppressor, ruling class and workers is taking place and the people cry out in their suffering.
2) God hears the cry of the poor and responds by choosing the side of the oppressed.
3) God’s response is not to ameliorate the situation through reform but transform it through liberation.
4) God and people act together toward freedom.

Thus the central faith event, the one remembered over and over throughout the Old Testament was an act of resistance and solidarity. God chose sides with the poor with bitter consequences for the oppressor. There was no neutrality, no equivocation. As Oscar Romero said: "So the church, like every person is faced with the most basic option of its faith — being for life or death. It is very clear to us that on this point there is not possible neutrality. We either serve the life of the Salvadorans or we are accomplices in their death."

Hearing the suffering of the people and responding to liberate them from bondage is the mark of the covenant and the essence of solidarity. As Raul, a Salvadoran in sanctuary in Detroit said, "Solidarity is doing whatever is needed to stop the suffering."

**Resistance: Profoundly Religious, Inevitably Political**

In our culture a false split has occurred between the religious and the political. The only real split that faces us is between life and death. Either we move spiritually, politically, religiously toward life or we, through lack of wholeness and resolve, disintegrate toward death.

In the Old Testament people of faith are constantly acting to change unjust power arrangements. The prophets rail against the wealthy who lie on beds of ivory while others go
without shoes. Knowing God for Jeremiah was doing justice to the poor and for Isaiah fasting meant letting the oppressed go free.

The New Testament begins with Mary's call for the princes to be thrown down from their thrones and the humble exalted. Jesus proclaims release to the captives and liberty to the oppressed as the call of his ministry. The early church maintained continuous resistance to the Roman Empire. The first creed of the church was simply, "Christ is Lord." Those three words were profoundly religious and inevitably political since the secular creed at the time was "Caesar is Lord." To declare Christ as Lord was to challenge the ultimate authority of the state. Its very utterance was a profound act of resistance.

Today there are other creeds, other idols that demand our allegiance. Patriotism, national security and law and order all ask that we burn incense on their altars and bow down exclusively to their dictates. To worship those gods is idolatry. Jesus put it bluntly, "You cannot serve God and mammon."

Resistance is rooted in the choice of God over the idols. Resistance matures in the clarity of whom we worship and the certainty of what claims our ultimate allegiance.

Law vs. Justice

The Old Testament clearly denounces laws that are unjust and only serve the interests of the wealthy. Justice and righteousness are held up as the ideals that are to be obeyed above sepcific national laws. Moses was a fugitive, Amos despised, Jeremiah arrested for treason. All claimed obedience to a higher law to justify their actions.

Jesus lived at a time when Judaism had become rigid and legalistic. He came to fulfill the law and breathe spirit into it again. When the disciples were hungry they picked corn on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees rebuked Jesus for working on the Sabbath and breaking a sacred law, Jesus responded that the Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath. Law was to serve the basic needs of the people and if it didn't it should be disobeyed. In his ongoing confrontation with the religious leaders Jesus accused them of tithing mint and dill and cumin (the letter of the law) but overlooking the weightier matters of the law like justice and mercy. The real aim of right living is justice and mercy not legalistic obedience. Even laws must live up to more ultimate criteria. In the same vein, Jesus denounced the Sadducees and Pharisees of straining out gnats and swallowing camels.

Today's camel swallowers hold up law and order as the ultimate goal of society. Those engaged in acts of resistance ask whose interest those laws serve. Do they serve to protect and consolidate the wealth and power of the few or do they mete out justice and mercy? The law, like the Sabbath, was made to serve all of humanity. Does it?

Conflict

In the exodus story God did not create the conflict between the Pharaoh and the people. The plagues and violence against the first-born were only the overt manifestation of the systemic violence. Conflict was embedded in the stooped backs, shortened life spans and daily misery of the Hebrew slaves. Acts of liberation and resistance do not create conflict but only make visible the violence that is already present in the oppressive situation. What was true in Egypt is now true in Central America. Neither the coffee picker who dies quietly at age 41 nor the 60% of the children who die before the age of five in Guatemala are considered violent deaths. Yet they are just that.

The overt conflicts of resistance to oppression are only the visible manifestations of a prior and more severe violence. Our choice then, is not between conflict or refraining from conflict; our only choice is on whose side do we enter the conflict. As Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez writes:

Politics today involves confrontation — and varying degrees of violence — among human groups, among social classes with opposing interests. It is equally hard for those who with all the good will in the world confuse universal love with ficticious harmony. But the Gospel enjoins us to love our enemies. This means we have to recognize the fact of class struggle and accept the fact that we have class enemies to combat. There is no way not to have enemies. What is important is not to exclude them from our love.
Keeping the Faith

Since 1980 an appeal written by a Christian reflection group has been circulating in the Chilean underground. It is written specifically to those whose commitment is waning. They entitled it "Don't Let Them Steal Your Soul Away."

What used to electrify us or outrage us not long ago leaves us unmoved and passive. This represents the greatest danger for us now, but it is also a great danger for our children and the coming generations: this loss of moral sensitivity, this willed or at least accepted confusion between good and evil. These are things that we must cry out against in the depths of our souls... Otherwise we shall forget about them. We are writing these lines so that you will not forget these things but will instead awaken and blaze like a torch.

This is a call to public resistance, a refusal to be still or silent in the face of atrocity that becomes commonplace. A Chilean folk song says, "to love means not to hide." Not hiding in the United States means being public in our denunciations, being outraged at outrageous injustices and lies. To love means becoming ever more visible and dramatic in our resistance.

Dorothee Solle, West German theologian, writes:

Subjugation kills. It kills every one of you. Your soul can die from this subjugation, from just going along with it, from not objecting, from choosing once more — not to know.

To question and rebel means to organize resistance. We have to take up the cause of peace, take sides with life, interfere nonviolently and illegally.

Being peacemakers will require that we wage peace with the same discipline, sacrifice and devotion with which nations wage war. To say No, Enough, — to refuse to be complicit any longer in the violence against a whole class of poor and working people — requires a resolve and determination founded on a wellspring of theological insight and political clarity. As Dom Helder Camara said, "Be careful how you live your life, it is the only Gospel many people will ever read."

Intimidation is the first line of defense for those in power. Intimidation happens through the police, through the use of titles (Senator, sir, Commander etc.), by making public space sacred (e.g. no protest, banners in a federal building), threats of jail or attempts to discredit the resisters (such as calling the sanctuary workers "smugglers" and "anarchists"). Intimidation is designed to defuse power before it is even exerted. The success of intimidation depends on evoking fear in the resisters. Faithfulness has always happened through overcoming fear. The Psalms, the prophets, the ministry of Jesus and the growth of the early church are all examples of maintaining the faith in the midst of frightening situations.

Marks of Resistance

1. Maintain Solidarity — Remember our sisters and brothers who are suffering. Remember in whose name we act. The more we can see the world through their eyes the clearer we will be about why we act and how far we have to go. Each moment the injustices continue more will die. We carry their lives with us when we act.

2. Gain Theological and Political Clarity — We must be clear who we worship and what we owe our ultimate allegiance. We need to constantly learn more about the present power arrangements, who benefits and who dies, how we contribute to or impede the suffering.

3. Know Your Rights — We have civil, economic and human rights. While they exist in theory most times they are not given in practice unless they are demanded.

4. Overcome Fears — We have to be more fearful of what will happen to the poorest of this world if we do not act than what will happen to us if we do resist.
SUSTAINING OUR RESISTANCE

"I intended to show that nonviolence will be effective, but not until it has achieved the massive dimensions, the disciplined planning, and the intense commitment of a sustained, direct-action movement of civil disobedience on the national scale."

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

No direct-action movement will be forceful enough to overcome a sustained system of injustice until it develops the three components that King found to be crucial to the struggle for civil-rights: massive dimensions, disciplined planning and an intense commitment that can be sustained over the long haul of resistance. The Pledge of Resistance Campaign has been highly successful in building a massive, nationwide movement; after only a few months we have built one of the most massive direct-action movements in recent history. With increasing clarity and momentum, we have begun invigorating our movement with disciplined planning, the second element in King's prescription. This organizational discipline has been manifested in a systematic series of nonviolence preparations throughout the Bay Area, now rippling through the rest of our region; thoughtful development of action scenarios; increasing competence in organizing a series of interim demonstrations and marches; and educational outreach to an expanding network.

But the third and final component of King's prescription—developing an intense, sustained commitment to resistance—is arguably the most crucial factor in our resistance to U.S. intervention, yet remains the most underdeveloped area in the entire Pledge network. The history of past direct-action campaigns delivers a clear warning of overriding import for us: nonviolent resistance has overcome injustice only to the extent that a community persevered through months, years and even decades of unrelenting resistance, defiance and noncooperation. Every serious movement of resistance has undergone a trial by fire. During that crucial stage when a massive wave of civil disobedience fundamentally challenges the unjust or militaristic might of a government, the ruling powers retaliate with repressive measures, ranging from psychological intimidation and smokescreen propaganda to lengthy prison sentences and physical brutality. Only those movements which have "held firm to truth" and renewed their commitment to resistance in the midst of persecution have reformed or overcome imperial oppression.

Past movements that have failed to develop the morale to persevere have cracked or disintegrated under governmental repression, and have been forgotten by history. The civil-rights movement underwent a "season of suffering" lasting more than a decade; civil-rights activists paid the price of bombings, assassinations, brutal police attacks, and thousands of jail sentences to accomplish even a modest desegregation of the South. The U.S. suffragist movement labored tirelessly for decades to win the right to vote for women, and then endured a three-year wave of arrests, lengthy imprisonment in inhumane conditions, hunger-strikes and forced feedings. If the suffragists had surrendered their fiery resolve, the back of their movement would have been broken.

If we are to seriously confront, challenge and overcome a system of U.S. intervention that has exploited Central America for more than a century, we will have to develop a moral resolve, an unconquerable spirit, a long-term commitment, an endurance that never falters. Perhaps our greatest adversary is our conditioning as Americans to expect comfort, leisure, affluence, and, above all, instant results and magic solutions. We are ruled by a great temptation to give up on a movement if it does not attain instantaneous success, splashy media coverage, and kid-glove treatment by the authorities. The best antidote we can prescribe for our conditioning and upbringing is a sober look at the incalculable costs willingly endured by every Latin American campesino or church worker who works for justice. Perhaps our declarations that we are in solidarity with the people of Central America are made too lightly, with too little understanding of the historical endurance and long-suffering commitment they have shouldered. We will be in solidarity with the Indian peoples of Guatemala and the children of Nicaragua only to the extent that we make an unshakable commitment to resist U.S. intervention as long as our friends are under fire. If we reflect on the decades of persecution they have endured while maintaining a living commitment to liberation, we can begin to understand that the desire for instant, painless results is an illusion possible only for North Americans. Daniel Berrigan outlines the true dimensions of nonviolent resistance:

"There are a hundred nonviolent means of resisting those who would inflict death as the ordinary way of life. There are a hundred ways of nonviolent resistance up to now untried, or half-tried, or badly tried.
But the peace will not be won without such serious and constant and sacrificial and courageous actions on the part of large numbers of good men and women. The peace will not be won without the moral equivalent of the loss and suffering and separation that the war itself is exacting."

The people of Central America provide living testimony to the “loss and suffering and separation” inflicted by the U.S. policy of intervention. The people of North America can become empowered to testify through serious and constant and courageous resistance that we no longer tolerate acts of genocide committed with our passive consent.

What this means for the Pledge of Resistance Campaign is that we are not preparing ourselves merely for a token show of legal protest and civil disobedience for a one-day period following the activation of our network. The Emergency Response Network in the Bay Area recently reached consensus that we are preparing for a sustained resistance campaign involving waves of marches, vigils, legal protests, and civil disobedience that will continue as long as we can sustain it—ideally, until the U.S. government relinquishes its stranglehold on Central America, or responds in some way to the cry of the American people for peace. Our scenario now emphasizes wave after wave of people legally protesting and risking arrest in a series of actions on successive days following the activation of the network.

Every individual pledge-signer is invited to participate only as their conscience leads them. No one is being asked to make a longer commitment than they feel prepared to make. This new emphasis on implementing successive waves of resistance is in no way a demand on anyone’s conscience; rather, it is an invitation to act at our highest level of moral commitment. It is a pledge on the part of the Bay Area organizers of the Pledge of Resistance Campaign that we will attempt to sustain our resistance as long as our Central American sisters and brothers suffer under the direct assaults of U.S. militarism.

Individual pledge-signers can participate in this vision of sustained resistance by engaging in acts of protest for one day, several successive days, or several weeks. Since our network is large, no one person needs to burn out by shouldering the entire burden of sustained resistance alone.

Some will choose to be arrested time after time in unrelenting waves of civil disobedience; others will choose to engage in legal protest or civil disobedience for a single day, and then carry the news of our actions for peace to their local com-
munities, media contacts, churches, schools and labor unions; still others will work to provide core support and nonviolence trainings for those protesting. As a pledge of our support for those who choose to commit themselves to several days or weeks of nonviolent action, Pledge organizers are working to develop a base station where the physical, emotional and legal needs of the resistance community can be served and nurtured.

We reached consensus on this vision of sustained waves of resistance not to impose a further burden on pledge-signers, but to attempt to remove the intolerable burden of oppression from our neighbors in Central America. We realize fully how difficult it is for any U.S. peace/justice movement to maintain a sustained commitment beyond the first few days of mobilization; we harbor no illusions about building a never-ending resistance movement out of the thin air of massive public apathy. Yet we can do nothing less. Henry David Thoreau wrote that under a government which imprisons anyone unjustly, the only place for a just person is also a prison. How much truer this is when entire countries are bombed with napalm and white phosphorous, when entire peoples are subjected to genocidal extermination, slow starvation, and enslavement in “strategic hamlets!” It is time to update Thoreau, and declare that under a government that imprisons the peasants of El Salvador in “Free-Fire Zones,” the only place for a just person is in an unstoppable resistance movement!

Building this sustained, persevering campaign is not primarily a question of strategy, tactics or logistics; obviously, these all need full development, and our progress in implementing these measures will be reported to pledge-signers. But the bedrock foundation of any attempt to build a sustained movement lies in the personal commitment, morale, conscience and courage of each and every pledge signer. A community empowers itself for a long-term struggle not so much through developing “winning strategies,” but through the intense bonds of dedication and love that link each of us with the larger resistance movement and with the people of Central America.

Ultimately, we will succeed in giving birth to an unrelenting resistance campaign precisely to the extent that we make a commitment to our Central American neighbors that is as personal, intense, loving and faithful as the commitment we make to our own children, our loved ones or our marriage partners. If we feel that our own homes are imminently threatened by destruction, if we feel that our own children are being bombed and kidnapped by security forces, then we will
make our pledge of resistance a sacred pledge to preserve the lives of children. Such a sacred pledge will give rise to a spirit of dedication and resistance that will not be vanquished by the repression of any government, nor eroded by the fatigue of the "long haul."

This will require that we all develop supportive communities and tightly bonded affinity groups. The Pledge Campaign must develop a core-support system that can be maintained for long periods, and spread the summons to sustained, disciplined resistance at every nonviolence preparation session and public event. Above all, we all need to learn to truly care for and nurture each other. Political analysis alone will not be enough; we must learn to be sensitive to personal needs, emotional stress and the looming threat of exhaustion and burnout that can erode the spirit of resistance.

We can learn the next steps in our evolving movement from the pioneers of resistance who have successfully built a community of justice that endures year after year despite brutal governmental repression. Let us heed the words of a base Christian community of Brazil, quoted by Gustavo Gutierrez:

“The faith and courage of the members of our communities in the face of threats, misunderstandings, and persecution for justice' sake are sustained and strengthened by the support each individual gives the others, by the support each community gives the others, by our very struggle and activity, by meditation on the word of God, and by the recollection of the witness given by those who have struggled for justice.”

-Written by Terry Messnan-Rucker of Emergency Response Network/ San Francisco

July 19, 1985 Chicago Pledge of Resistance Action on the Sixth Anniversary of the Nicaraguan Revolution. The theme was "Embargo South Africa Not Nicaragua". Participants dyed the river red symbolizing the blood of the people spilled in Nicaragua, throughout Central America and South Africa.
THEOLOGY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF CENTRAL AMERICA

"...God has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble...filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty..." Luke 1:52-3

"God has sent me to preach good news to the poor...to set free the oppressed..."
Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18

A fundamental mark of faith is choosing to side unequivocally with the poor. Among the poor are the people in Central America, organized and struggling for justice, peace and freedom.

In taking a stand with the forgotten ones of history, with the poor and powerless, we are not asked to choose between the spiritual and the political or the pastoral and the prophetic. Those terms describe a false dichotomy in reality. The division that confronts us is life vs. death. In that choice there is no neutrality. As Oscar Romero said, "There is no neutrality; either we stand for the life of the Salvadorans or we participate in their death..." We either move spiritually and politically toward life or by our silence and inactivity we move spiritually and politically toward death.

We face the same choice as the Jewish people yearning for liberation from Egyptian oppression. God's presence was manifested through the people and their struggle. As the people in the Central American base communities wrote: "The force of life that comes from God is manifesting itself exactly in those places where life is oppressed, enslaved and crucified on the Calvaries of this world. Today, as in the time of captivity, the God that resurrects Jesus from death is hidden on the side of the poor, working and liberating the people with the victorious force that conquers death and recreates life." As North Americans we must join in solidarity with that force for life by siding with the poor of Central America.

Years ago in Central America a colonial theology emphasized the need to baptize babies before they died in order to ensure their entry into heaven. When mothers brought to priests their sick and starving children, bellies bloated with worms and faces pallid from malnutrition, they received prayers, blessings and words of consolation that promised an eternal reward in heaven for those who patiently suffer on earth. That theology served to undergird and justify the oppression and exploitation of the many poor by the few rich.

In the past several decades, churches have been developing a pastoral theology based on a "preferential option for the poor", a position strongly affirmed at the Latin American Bishops Conference in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. This position was initially a pastoral response to the suffering people in local parishes. Concretely, this "option" meant helping the people to organize cooperatives, teaching them to read, preaching that they are the children of God and have the full range of rights. The people began to demand the right to live, the right of their children to survive beyond the age of five. (Presently in Guatemala 60% of the children in rural areas die before the age of five.) They saw in the vision of Isaiah, a new earth where equality, sharing and cooperation would exist.

This pastoral approach developed small base communities, much like the first churches
described in Acts. As this pastoral practice unfolded, the rich and powerful reacted with repression. Pastoral agents and community workers who chose to stand in solidarity with the poor were singled out and brutally murdered. They became our contemporary martyrs. In order to maintain the status quo, where the few controlled the vast majority of the land and wealth, right-wing death squads and military dictators unleashed a reign of terror aimed at stopping the church from standing with the poor. Nearly every attempt at peaceful protest ended in mass killings of protestors. Notable examples of this were when the Salvadoran National Guard fired on the people attending the funeral of Archbishop Oscar Romero and when the Guatemalan army burned alive 39 peasants in the Spanish Embassy.

There is a limit to the number of times a people can bear walking a tiny coffin to some remote graveyard. There is a limit to how many times people will accept cuts in their meager wages, tolerate starvation and endure pain and grief. A line is drawn, resistance breaks out, the barricades are mounted, and the people organize to defend themselves.

Violence has been embedded in the flesh of the Central American poor for decades - the stooped backs, the eyes and throats burning from pesticides, the stomachs in constant pain from contaminated water, the aching muscles strained to the limits, the premature deaths. And beyond all this are the daily indignities of being considered animals rather than people, and the constant fear of losing jobs or land or houses or sons and daughters. An historical conflict of life versus death has been embodied in the poor for centuries. Periodic revolts have happened in the past, nearly one every generation since the conquest in the sixteenth century. We are living through another, and we are being asked by the struggling people of Central America to choose sides.

Oscar Romero saw how this process of liberation is completely consistent with the Gospel.

Those who are involved in the process of liberation in our country can be assured that the church will continue to accompany them — with the authentic voice of the Gospel....I believe in the mass organizations; I believe in the need for the Salvadoran people to become organized.

Salvadoran theologian Jon Sobrino, SJ has said, "To be effective, love for the poor masses tends to lead to the social organization of the people, to political organization, and in extreme cases even to political-military organizations. Romero spoke realistically about the possible legitimacy of an insurrection in El Salvador, 'It is very possible armed struggle itself, when it is inevitable and just can be a vehicle of holiness.'"

To stand in solidarity with the Central American poor struggling for freedom does not necessarily mean sending them guns. Such a way may be beyond our range of expertise and responsibility. But it does mean stopping the flow of U.S. arms that are used to massacre the people.
But perhaps what most shocks the Christians who seek to take sides frankly and decisively with the poor and exploited, and to enter into involvement with the struggle of the proletariat, is the conflictual nature of praxis in this context. Politics today involves confrontation—and varying degrees of violence—among human groups, among social classes with opposing interests. It is equally hard for those who with all the good will in the world confuse universal love with fictitious harmony. But the Gospel enjoins us to love our enemies. This means we have to recognize the fact of class struggle and accept the fact that we have class enemies to combat. There is no way not to have enemies. What is important is not to exclude them from our love.

This vision reflects the life teaching of Jesus, who clearly sided with the poor, the marginal, while continuously challenging the rich and powerful to change their ways. In the end the stiffnecked wealthy and their representatives engineered his arrest, torture and execution.

The poor of Central America have laid a moral claim on our lives. As the sanctuary caravan to Weston Priory ended its 1700-mile journey, a reporter asked Elena Exco, Guatemalan mother of five, how she felt. After a long pause, she said, "This is the happiest and saddest day of my life. It is the saddest because I know, and will never be able to forget, the thousands of mothers still in Guatemala mourning the loss of their sons and daughters. Solidarity is feeling the sadness of those mothers and, without ever having met them, calling them by name. It is taking the names of victims into our lives. It has been said that one death is a tragedy, a thousand only a statistic. To be in solidarity with the people of Central America means to remember that even though tens of thousands have died, they have all died one by one. They all had names. The urgency of their cries must live on in us through our actions to insure that the violence against them stops.

Authentic solidarity goes beyond remembering the suffering of our brothers and sisters. It embodies the biblical call to universal brotherhood and sisterhood. It lays upon us a new sense of kinship. We as North Americans are called to claim our family to the south.

That means that Maria Elizabeth, the 55-year-old woman who goes every day to the San Salvador morgue carrying pictures of her disappeared son, is our mother. Cristina, the 17-year-old university student raped by the Salvadoran National Guard is our sister. Roberto, a Nicaraguan delegate of the Word, his throat slit by contras attacking Jalapa, is our brother. Fliberto, a Mayan Indian from Quiche, who now sits in a clandestine jail in Guatemala City, is our father.

When people ask what they can do to help the people of Central America, our response is: What would you do if your sister were being raped, your brother killed, your father disappeared and your mother mourning daily? We must do as much as we can at the deepest levels of our lives.

The ultimate accountability is to the God of Abraham, Isaac, Ruth, Jacob and of the suffering and struggling people of Central America. We will be judged on how we have supported their life, their liberation, in the same way as the German church is judged today for its stance regarding Nazi repression and the Holocaust. During the rise of the Third Reich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that the church must of course bind up the victims being crushed beneath the wheel, but there comes a time when the church must be the stick put in the spokes to stop the wheel from crushing the people. In regard to Central America today, religious communities can open their doors here and there to those fleeing persecution and death. They can work to get countries to receive the flood of refugees. And they can try to block the sending of weapons and material that feed the blood baths.
At this time in history we emphasize the need to stop the flow of M-16 rifles, howitzers, ammunition, fragmentation grenades, advisors, spy planes and other surveillance equipment to El Salvador and Honduras. We struggle to halt phosphorus bombings that mutilate Salvadoran children and stop indiscriminate strafing of villagers from U.S. attack helicopters. We seek to uncover and name the connections between the U.S. government and the Salvadoran death squads and the connection between U.S. business interests and the denial of human and economic rights of the vast majority of people. We believe that to stop short of this is to betray the Central American people.

We must stand in sisterhood and brotherhood with Central American people. We are filled with rage, and our outrage is an appropriate human response to mass slaughter and the denial of the right to life. We are outraged that this is occurring at all, let alone with the assistance and instigation of our government. Perhaps if the German church had been stronger and more united, millions of Jews would have been saved. For us, to love is to create a movement capable of stopping U.S. intervention in Central America, a movement not simply of protest or witness but of resistance. This effort is profoundly religious and inevitably political.

In this spirit almost all major religious organizations in the U.S. have called for an end to U.S. military aid to Central America. The American Baptist Church / USA stated in its Biennial Session in 1983: "We urgently call upon all governments to: 1. Stop military aid and intervention in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala; 2. Stop...destabilization efforts against all governments of Central America; 3. Support vigorously a negotiated political solution..." When people defy federal law by harboring refugees or by trespassing on federal property for the greater necessity of stopping the slaughter in Central America, they act as prophets.

In our efforts we must guard against arrogance and a new triumphalism. Since it is by their fruits that we shall know them, we cannot claim to control the spirit of truth and love.
**Guatemala:** In 1954, Guatemala's last democratically-elected government was overthrown by a military coup organized by the CIA. Since 1954 the country has been ruled by military dictators. To keep peasants from supporting opposition forces, the government has imprisoned, tortured and killed thousands of its citizens, mostly Indians who make up half the population.

Numerous human rights groups have characterized the Guatemalan government as one of the worst human rights violators in the world. Government violence has forced roughly one million Guatemalans from their homes; many now live in exile in neighboring countries or in "squatter" camps inside Guatemala. Military aid from the United States, cut off in 1977 due to human rights violations, has been resumed by the Reagan administration.

**El Salvador:** Since the late 1970's, El Salvador has been torn by a civil war between the government and guerrillas fighting for a redistribution of the country's wealth. The war has taken the lives of over 50,000 people, most killed by the military and right-wing death squads.

The Reagan administration has given the Salvadoran government over $1 billion in economic aid, and over $700 million in military aid. But this money only prolongs the fighting. A growing number of Salvadorans and Americans alike believe a solution to the conflict can only come through political negotiations.

**Honduras:** Honduras is the poorest country in the western hemisphere, except for Haiti. Annual per capita income is $417; two-thirds of the population is illiterate; unemployment stands at 40 percent; and 70 percent of the people suffer from bad housing, ill-health, and constant hunger.

The Reagan administration chose Honduras as its key military ally in Central America because it borders the three countries with revolutionary activity. The U.S. has been increasing arms aid (over $200 million since 1981), conducting extensive military maneuvers, and establishing bases for over 10,000 "contra" terrorists who raid Nicaragua. There is growing opposition to the U.S. military buildup, however, and even top members of the Honduran government have called for a less militaristic U.S. policy.

**Nicaragua:** In July 1979, the Nicaraguan people overthrew the US-backed Somoza dictatorship. Since then numerous popular reforms (see box) have been implemented by the ruling Sandinista party—named for Augusto Cesar Sandino who began the independence struggle in the 1920s.

The Reagan administration has mounted a campaign of military and economic warfare against Nicaragua. CIA-backed "contra" terrorists have killed thousands, caused massive property damage, and forced the Nicaraguan government to divert scarce resources from development to defense.

**Costa Rica:** Once known as the Switzerland of Central America, Costa Rica is now experiencing the worst economic crisis of its history. The middle class, previously the basis of Costa Rica's stability, is being wiped out; over 70 percent of the population now lives below the poverty line.

In 1948 Costa Rica took the laudable step of abolishing its military. But the Reagan administration has been persuading the Costa Rican government to rearm in order to put more pressure on Nicaragua. A growing number of Costa Ricans, however, fear being drawn into a regional war, and oppose the militarization of their society.
Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences

NOAM CHOMSKY

The following is an edited version of a talk given at Harvard University on March 19, 1985, by Noam Chomsky, a member of the board of Resist.

In the real world, U.S. global planning has always been sophisticated and careful, as you would expect from a major superpower with a highly centralized and class-conscious dominant social group. Their power, in turn, is rooted in their own ownership and management of the society and economy, as is the norm in most societies. During World War II, American planners were very well aware that the United States was going to emerge as a world-dominant power in a position of hegemony that had few historical parallels and they organized and met in order to deal with this situation.

From 1939 to 1945, extensive studies were conducted by the Council on Foreign Relations and the State Department. One group was called the War-Peace Studies Group, which met for six years and produced extensive geopolitical analyses and plans. The Council on Foreign Relations is essentially the business input to foreign policy planning. These groups also involved every top planner in the State Department with the exception of the Secretary of State.

The conception that they developed is what they called “Grand Area” planning. The Grand Area was to be a region that was subordinated to the needs of the American economy. As one planner put it, it was to be the region that is “strategically necessary for world control.” The geopolitical analysis held that the Grand Area had to include at least the Western Hemisphere, the Far East and the former British Empire, which were then in the process of dismantling and taking over ourselves. This is what is called “anti-imperialism” in American scholarship. The Area was also to include western and southern Europe and the oil-producing regions of the Middle East, and in fact, it was to include everything, if that were possible. Detailed plans were laid for particular regions of the Grand Area and also for international institutions that were to organize and police it, essentially in the interests of this subordination to American domestic needs.

With respect to the Far East, the plans were roughly as follows: Japan, it was understood, would sooner or later be the industrial heartland of Asia once again. Since Japan is a resource-poor area, it would need Southeast Asia and South Asia for resources and markets. All of this, of course, would be incorporated with the global system dominated by the United States.

With regard to Latin America, the matter was put most plainly by Secretary of War Henry Stimson in May 1945 when he was explaining how we must eliminate and dismantle all regional systems dominated by any other power, particularly the British, while maintaining and extending our own system. He explained with regard to Latin America as follows: “I think that it’s not asking too much to have our little region over here which never has bothered anybody.”

The basic thinking behind all this has been explained quite lucidly on a number of occasions. (This is a very open society and if one wants to learn what’s going on, you can do it; it takes a little work, but the documents are there and the history is there also.) One of the clearest and most lucid accounts of the planning behind this was by George Kennan, who was one of the most thoughtful, humane, and liberal of the planners, and, in fact, was eliminated from the State Department largely for that reason. Kennan was the head of the State Department Policy Planning Staff in the late 1940’s. In the following document, PPS23, February 1948, he outlined the basic planning:

“We have about 50 percent of the world’s wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real test in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benevolence. . . . We should cease to talk about vague and . . . unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.”

There are some questions that one can raise about Kennan’s formulation, a number of them, but I’ll keep to one. One is whether he is right in suggesting that “human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization” should be dismissed as irrelevant to American foreign policy. Actually, a review of the historical record suggests a different picture, namely that the United States often has opposed with tremendous ferocity, and violence, these elements — human rights, democratization, and the raising of living standards.

This is particularly the case in Latin America and there are very good reasons for it. The commitment of these doctrines is inconsistent with the use of harsh measures to maintain the disparity, to insure our control over 50 percent of the resources, and our exploitation of the world. In short, what we might call “the First Freedom” (there were Four Freedoms; you remember, but there was one that was left out), the Freedom to Rob, and that’s really the only one that counts; the others were mostly for show. And in order to maintain the freedom to rob and exploit, we do have to consistently
If a government is so evil or otherwise as to undertake a course of action of this sort, it immediately becomes an enemy. It becomes a part of the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy" to take over the world, as John F. Kennedy put it. It is postulated that they have been taken over by the Russians if that's the policy that they appear to be committed to.

On these grounds, American policy towards Nicaragua after the 1979 revolution could have been predicted by simply observing that the health and education budget of Nicaragua rose rapidly, that an effective land reform program was instituted, and that the infant mortality rate dropped very dramatically, to the point where Nicaragua won an award from the World Health Organization for health achievements (all of this despite horrifying conditions left by the Somoza dictatorship which we had installed and supported, and continued to support to the very end, despite a lot of nonsense to the contrary that one hears.) If a country is devoted to policies like I've just described it is obviously the enemy. It is part of "the monolithic and ruthless conspiracy"--the Russians are taking it over. And, in fact, it is part of a conspiracy. It is part of a conspiracy to take from us what is ours, namely "our raw materials," and a conspiracy to prevent us from "maintaining the disparity," which of course must be the fundamental element of our foreign policy.

Well, it is obvious that a country of this sort is an enemy—that is, part of "the monolithic and ruthless conspiracy"—and that we have to take drastic measures to ensure that "the rot does not spread," which is the terminology constantly used by the planners. In fact, when one reads reports of this kind or looks at the health and education statistics—the nutritional level, land reform, and so on—one can understand very well why American hostility to Nicaragua has reached such fanatic, and almost hysterical levels. It follows from the geopolitical conception previously outlined.

The people who are committed to these dangerous heresies such as using their resources for their own purposes or believing that the government is committed to the welfare of its own people and so on, may not be Soviet clients to begin with and, in fact, quite regularly they're not. In Latin America, they are often members, to begin with, of Bible study groups that become self-help groups, church organizations, peasant organizations, and so on and so forth. But by the time we get through with them, they will be Soviet clients. The reason they will be Soviet clients by the time we get through with them is that they will have nowhere else to turn for any minimal form of protection against the terror and violence that we regularly unleash against them if they undertake programs of the kind described.

And this is a net gain for American policy. One thing you'll notice, if you look over the years, is that the United States quite consistently tries to create enemies if a country does escape from the American grip. What we want to do is drive the country into being a base for the Russians because that justifies us in carrying out the violent attacks which we must carry out, given the geopolitical conception under which we organize and control much of the world. So that's what we do, and then we "defend" ourselves. We engage in self-defense against the Great Satan or the Evil Empire or the "monolithic and ruthless conspiracy."

More generally, the Soviet Union plays the same kind of game within its
narrower domains, and that explains a good bit of the structure of the Cold War, in fact.

Well, what has all of this meant for Indochina and Central America? Let's begin with Indochina.

Now remember I'm talking about the real world, not the one in the PBS television series and so on. In the real world what happened was that, by 1948, the American State Department recognized, explicitly, that Ho Chi Minh was the sole significant leader of Vietnamese nationalism, but that if Vietnamese nationalism was successful, it could be a threat to the Grand Area, and therefore something had to be done about it. The threat was not so much in Vietnam itself, which is not terribly important for American purposes (the freedom to rob in Vietnam is not all that significant); the fear was that "the rot would spread," namely the rot of successful social and economic development. In a very poor country which had suffered enormously under European colonialism, successful social and economic development could have a demonstration effect. Such development could be a model for people elsewhere and could lead them to try to duplicate it and gradually the Grand Area would unravel.

So, for example, when the Bishop regime in Grenada began to take any constructive moves, it was immediately the target of enormous American hostility, not because the little speck in the Caribbean is any potential military threat or any of that sort of business. It is a threat in some other respects; if a tiny, nothing-country with no natural resources like this can begin to extricate itself from the system of misery and oppression that we've helped to impose, then others who have even more resources might be tempted to do likewise.

Well, we recognized that we had to prevent the rot from spreading so we had to support France in its effort to reconquer its former colony, and we did so. By the time the French had given up, we were providing about 80 percent of the costs of the war and in fact we came close to using nuclear weapons towards the end, by 1954, in Indochina.

There was a political settlement, the Geneva Accords, in 1954, which the United States bitterly opposed. We immediately proceeded to undermine them, installing in South Vietnam a violent, terrorist regime, which, of course, rejected (with our support) the elections which were projected. Then, the regime turned to a terrorist attack against the population, particularly against the anti-French Resistance, which we called the Viet Cong, in South Vietnam. The regime had killed about 80,000 people (that means we had killed, through our plans and mercenaries) by the time John F. Kennedy took over in 1961. This assault against the population, after several years, did arouse resistance—such acts have a way of doing that—and by 1959, the anti-French Resistance received authorization from the Communist leadership, after several years and after tens of thousands of people were murdered, to use violence in self-defense. Then, the government, which we had established, immediately began to collapse because it had no popular support, as the United States conceded.

By 1959, the Resistance began to receive some support from the northern half of the country in retaliation against the violence unleashed by the American-organized attack from against the population of the southern part of Vietnam. The government we had installed to carry out this attack and to block the political agreements quickly began to collapse as soon as resistance began. Then Kennedy had a problem. It's important to realize how he handled this. This is one of the dissimilarities between Vietnam and Central America to which I will return. In 1961 and 1962 Kennedy simply launched a war against South Vietnam. That is, in 1961 and 1962, the American Air Force began extensive bombing and defoliation in South Vietnam, aimed primarily against the rural areas where 85 percent of the population lived. This was part of a program designed to drive several million people to concentration camps, which we called "strategic hamlets," where they would be surrounded by armed guards and barbed wire, "protected," as we put it, from the guerrillas who, we conceded, they were willingly supporting. That's what we call "aggression" or "armed attack" when some other country does it. We call it "defense" when we do it.

This was when the "defense" of South Vietnam escalated, with this attack in 1961 and 1962. But that again failed. The resistance increased, and by 1965, the United States was compelled to move an outright land invasion of South Vietnam, escalating that attack again. We also at that time initiated the bombing of North Vietnam, which, as anticipated, brought North Vietnamese troops to the South several months later.

Throughout, however, the major American attack was against South Vietnam. When we began bombing North Vietnam in February 1965, we extended the bombing of South Vietnam which had already been going on for several years. We extended the bombing of South Vietnam to triple the scale of the bombing of North Vietnam, and throughout, it was South Vietnam that bore the main brunt of the American war in Indochina. We later extended the war to Cambodia and Laos.

As far as the major aims were concerned, the American war was a smashing success. For one thing, there was a huge massacre. The first phase of the war, the French war, probably left about half a million dead. From 1954 to 1965 we succeeded in killing maybe another 160,000 to 170,000 South Vietnamese, mostly peasants. The war, from 1965 to 1975, left a death toll of maybe in the neighborhood of 3 million people. There were also perhaps a million dead in Cambodia and Laos. So all together about 5 million people were killed, which is a respectable achievement when you're trying to prevent any successful social and economic development. Furthermore, there were millions and millions of refugees created by the American bombardment, which was quite extraordinarily savage, not to mention the murderous ground operations.

The land was devastated. People can't farm because of the destruction and unexploded ordnance. And this is all a success. Vietnam is not going to be a model of social and economic development for anyone else. In fact, it will be lucky to survive. The rot will not spread. We also made sure of that by our actions in the surrounding areas, where we buttressed the American positions.

The post-war American policy has been designed to insure that it stays that way. We follow a policy of what some conservative business circles out
of the United States call "bleeding Vietnam." That is, a policy of imposing maximum suffering and harshness in Vietnam in the hope of perpetuating the suffering and insuring that only the most harsh and brutal elements will survive. Then you can use their brutality as a justification for having carried out the initial attack. This is done constantly and quite magnificently in our ideological system. We are now supporting Pol Pot forces; we concede this incidentally. The State Department has stated that our reason for supporting the Democratic Kampuchea Coalition, which is largely based on Khmer Rouge forces, is because of its "continuity" with the Pol Pot regime, therefore we support it indirectly through China or through other means. This is part of the "bleeding Vietnam." Also, of course, we offer no aid, no reparations, though we certainly owe them. We block aid from international institutions and we've succeeded in blocking aid from other countries.

India tried to send, in 1977, 100 buffalo, a very small amount, to Vietnam to try to replenish the buffalo herd that was destroyed in the war. We tried to block it by threatening to cancel Food for Peace aid to India if they sent the 100 buffalo. Mennonites in the U.S. tried to send pencils to Cambodia; again the State Department tried to block it. They also tried to send shovels to Laos to dig up the unexploded ordnance. Of course, we could do it easily with heavy equipment, but that we are plainly not going to do.

Let's turn to Central America, that is, "our little region over here that never has bothered anybody," as Henry Stimson put it. Major U.S. military intervention in Central America began 131 years ago in 1854 when the United States Navy bombarded and destroyed a port town in Nicaragua, San Juan del Norte. This town was in fact captured for a few days by contras from Costa Rica about a year ago. The press made a big fuss about it, but they failed to note the historical antecedents. Our bombing and destruction of the town was not a capricious act. It was an act of revenge. What had happened was that a yacht owned by an American millionaire, Cornelius Vanderbilt, had sailed into port and an official had attempted to levy port charges on it. So, in revenge the Navy burned the town down to the ground.

Well, that was our first military intervention in Nicaragua and there have been many since. In the first third of this century, the U.S. sent military forces to Cuba, Panama, Mexico, and Honduras and occupied Haiti for twenty years. There, under Wilson, we reinstituted slavery, burned villages, destroyed, tortured, and left a legacy which still remains, in one of the most miserable corners of the one of the most miserable regions of the world. Woodrow Wilson, the great apostle of self-determination, celebrated this doctrine by invading Mexico, Haiti and by launching a counter-insurgency war in the Dominican Republic, again, with ample destruction and torture. There, again, we established a long-lasting military dictatorship, under Trujillo, one of the worst dictators we managed to establish in the region. The U.S. invaded Nicaragua repeatedly, finally leaving behind a brutal, corrupt, and long-lasting military dictatorship, the regular consequence of U.S. intervention.

In the post World War II period, there have been military interventions in Guatemala (probably the country which comes closest in the contemporary world to Nazi Germany), Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Grenada. A twenty-year war of terrorism was waged against Cuba. Cuba has been the target of more international terrorism, probably, than the rest of the world combined and, therefore, in the American ideological system, it is regarded as the source of international terrorism, exactly as Orwell would have predicted. And now there's a war against Nicaragua.

The impact of all of this has been absolutely horrendous. There's vast starvation throughout the region while crop lands are devoted to exports to the United States. There's slave labor, crushing poverty, torture, mass murder, every horror you can think of. In El Salvador alone, from October 1979 (a date to which I'll return) until December 1981—approximately two years—about 30,000 people were murdered and about 600,000 refugees created. Those figures have about doubled since. Most of the murderers were carried out by U.S.-backed military forces, including so-called "death squads." The efficiency of the massacre in El Salvador has recently increased with direct participation of American military forces. American planes based in Honduras and Panamanian sanctuaries military aircraft, now coordinate bombing raids over El Salvador, which means that the Salvadorean Air Force can more effectively kill fleeing peasants and destroy villages, and in fact, the kill rate has gone up corresponding to that.

At the same time, the war in Nicaragua has left unknown thousands killed, those added to the 50,000 or so killed in the last stages of the Somoza dictatorship. Since we overthrew the democratic government of Guatemala in 1954, according to a Guatemalan human rights group, in Mexico (none can function in Guatemala) about 150,000 people have been murdered, again; primarily by U.S.-backed forces and sometimes with direct U.S. military participation.

These figures kind of lose their meaning when you just throw numbers around. You see what they mean when you look more closely at the refugees'
reports: for example, a report by a few people who succeeded in escaping from a village in Quiche province where the government troops came in, rounded up the population, and put them in the town building. They then took all the men out and decapitated them. Then they raped and killed the women. Then they took the children and killed them by bashing their heads with rocks. This has been what our taxes have been paying for — sometimes by means of our proxies — since the 1954 successful overthrow of Guatemalan democracy, where we have effectively preserved order ever since. I might mention that the 1954 American-instigated coup was referred to by John Foster Dulles, the Secretary of State, as "a new and glorious chapter in the already glorious traditions of the American States."

Virtually every attempt to bring about any constructive change in this U.S.-constructed Chamber of Horrors has met with a new dose of U.S. violence. The historical record is one of the most shameful stories in modern history and naturally is very little known here, though in a free society it would be well-understood and taught in elementary school in all of its sordid and gruesome detail.

Throughout this period the public pose has always been that we are defending ourselves. So, in Vietnam, we are defending ourselves against the Vietnamese when we attack South Vietnam. It’s what Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations called “internal aggression,” another phrase that Orwell would have admired and one that we use quite commonly. “Internal aggression,” meaning aggression by the Vietnamese against us, in Vietnam — and we’ve often had to defend ourselves against that kind of aggression. Nicaragua today is another case. So, for example, when our mercenary army attacks Nicaragua, we argue that this is defense — that we are defending Mexico, Central America, and ultimately ourselves from Russian imperialism or “internal aggression.”

Well, it’s interesting to look at that in the light of history. Virtually everything that is now happening has happened before, in corresponding or very similar forms. Our historical amnesia prevents us from seeing that. Everything looks new and therefore we don’t understand it. It must just be a stupid error.

So, for example, in the late 1920’s, President Coolidge sent the Marines once again to Nicaragua. At that time we were defending Nicaragua against Mexico, now we are defending Mexico against Nicaragua. At that time we were defending Nicaragua against Russian imperialism when we sent the Marines that time, eventually ending up with the establishment of the Somoza dictatorship. President Coolidge, in fact, said, “Mexico was on trial before the world,” when he sent the Marines to Nicaragua at that time. Notice that the bottom line remains the same as the cast of characters changes: Kill Nicaraguans.

What did we do before we had the Bolsheviks to defend ourselves against? For example, when Wilson sent the Marines to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, that was before the Bolshevik revolution, so we couldn’t be defending ourselves against Russian imperialism. Well, then we were defending ourselves against the Huns. The hand of the Huns was particularly obvious in Haiti. If you look back, the Marine Commander there, Marine Commander Thorpe explained that “the handwork of the German” was evident here because of the kind of resistance that the “niggers” were putting up. Obviously, they couldn’t be doing it on their own so there must be German direction. The same sentiments were expressed throughout. So for example, in the Dominican Republic the resistance was being carried out by the people who Theodore Roosevelt had, during an earlier intervention, called “Damned Dagoes,” or by “spigs,” “coons,” “nigs,” in the terms that are regularly used to describe the people against whom we’re defending ourselves, the perpetrators of such “internal aggression.”

Well let’s go back a little further, because self-defense is deeply rooted in American history. In the 19th century, when we were wiping out the Native American population, we were defending ourselves against savage attacks from the British and Spanish sanctuaries in Canada and Florida and therefore we had to take over Florida, and we had to take the West to defend ourselves from these attacks. In 1846 we were compelled to defend ourselves against Mexico. That aggression began deep inside Mexican territory, but again, that was self-defense against Mexican aggression. We had to take about a third of Mexico in the process, including California where the explanation was that it was a preemptive strike. The British were about to take it over, and, in self-defense, we had to beat them to it. And so it goes, all the way back. The Evil Empire changes, but the truth of the matter remains about the same. And if American history were actually taught, people would know these things. This is the core of American history.

Let me return to Kennan’s formula, "human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization," considering now Latin America. I want to consider the question that I raised before: are they really irrelevant to our policy the way he suggested they ought to be? Let’s take a closer look.

Take human rights. Now actually, that’s an empirical question. You can study how American foreign policy is related to human rights, and it has been studied for Latin America and elsewhere. The leading American specialist on human rights in Latin America, Lars Schultz, has a study published in Comparative Politics, January 1981, in which he investigated exactly that question. He asked how the human rights climate in a country correlated with American aid. He chose a very narrow conception of human rights, what he called, “anti-torture rights,” that is, the right to be free from torture by the government and so on. And, in fact, he found there is a relationship between human rights and American foreign policy: namely, the more the human rights climate deteriorates, the more American aid increases. The correlation was furthermore strong. There was no correlation between American aid to need. This aid included military aid and it went on right through the Carter administration. To use his words, he said that “aid has tended to flow disproportionately to Latin American governments which torture their citizens,” to “the hemisphere’s relatively egregious violators of fundamental human rights.” This might suggest that Kennan understated the case: human rights are not irrelevant, rather, we have a positive hatred of them. We send aid to precisely those governments which torture their citizens, and the more effectively they do so, the more we’ll aid them. At least that’s what the evidence
shows in this and other studies.

A correlation isn't a theory. It's not an explanation. We still need an explanation, and a number of them come to mind. One possible explanation would be that the American leadership just likes torture. So the more a government tortures its citizens the more we will aid them. That's a possible explanation but it's an unlikely one. The real explanation is probably Kennan's: that is, it is irrelevant. Human rights are irrelevant. What we like is something else. There have been other studies that suggest a theory to explain the correlation.

There's one by a co-author of mine, Edward Herman, an economist at the University of Pennsylvania, who investigated the same sort of thing that Schoultz studied, but on a worldwide basis. Herman again found the same correlation: the worse the human rights climate, the more American aid goes up. But he also carried out another study which gives us some insight into what's really happening. He compared American aid to changes in the investment climate, the climate for business operations, as measured, for example, by whether foreign firms can repatriate profits and that sort of thing. It turned out there was a very close correlation. The better the climate for business operations, the more American aid — the more we support the foreign government. That gives you a plausible theory. American foreign policy is in fact based on the principle that human rights is irrelevant, but that improving the climate for foreign business operations is highly relevant. In fact, that flows from the central geopolitical conception.

Now how do you improve the business climate in a Third World country? Well, it's easy. You murder priests, you torture peasant organizers, you destroy popular organization, you institute mass murder and repression to prevent any popular organization. And that improves the investment climate. So there's a secondary correlation between American aid and the deterioration of human rights. It's entirely natural that we should tend to aid countries that are egregious violators of fundamental human rights and that torture their citizens, and that's indeed what we find.

Well so much for human rights. What about raising the living standards? In Latin America there has been economic growth. If you look, the GNP keeps going up but at the same time, typically, there is increased suffering and starvation for a very large part of the population.

So, in one case, Brazil, the most important Latin American country, there has been what was called an "economic miracle" in the last couple of decades, ever since we destroyed Brazilian democracy by supporting a military coup in 1964. The support for the coup was initiated by Kennedy but finally carried to a conclusion by Johnson. The coup was called by Kennedy's ambassador, Lincoln Gordon, "the single most decisive victory for freedom in the mid-twentieth century." We installed the first really major National Security State, Nazi-like State, in Latin America, with high-technology torture and so on. Gordon called it "totally democratic," "the best government Brazil ever had." And that, in turn, had a significant domino effect in Latin America; Brazil is an important country. Well, there was an economic miracle and there was an increase in the Gross National Product. There was also an increase in suffering for much of the population.

So, for example, here are some statistics from a Brazilian scientific journal concerning Rio de Janeiro, which is far from the poorest area in Brazil. The figures on malnutrition for children showed that from 0 to 2.5 months, two-thirds of them suffered severe malnutrition, from 5 to 12 months, 40 percent, from 12 months to 2.5 years, 10 percent. Now, why do the figures go down? Well, you can figure that out: they die. The children die, therefore the figures go down. That's in Rio de Janeiro as one consequence of "the most decisive victory for freedom in the mid-twentieth century." And that story is duplicated throughout much of Latin America, where the United States has successfully intervened, from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, to Nicaragua and Guatemala and so on.

So much for the second element, raising of the living standards. What about democratization? Well, we've repeatedly intervened to overthrow democratic governments. This is understandable. The more a country is democratic, the more it is likely to be responsive to the public, and, hence, committed to the dangerous doctrine that "the government has a direct responsibility for the welfare of the people," and, therefore, not devoted to the transcendent needs of Big Brother. Therefore we have to do something about it. Democracy is O.K. but only as long as we can control it and be sure that it comes out the way we want, just as the Russians permit democratic elections in Poland. That is the historical story. So, in Guatemala, the government was democratic but out of control, so we had to overthrow it. Similarly in Chile under Allende. Or take the Dominican Republic, which has long been the beneficiary of our solicitous care. Woodrow Wilson began a major counterinsurgency campaign which ended in the early 1920's and which led to the Trujillo dictatorship, one of the most brutal and vicious and corrupt dictatorships that we managed to install in Latin America. In the early 1960's it looked as though there was going to be a move towards democracy. There was, in fact, a democratic election in 1962. Juan Bosch was elected, a liberal democrat. The Kennedy Administration was very cool. The way it reacted is interesting. (You have to understand that the U.S. so totally dominates these countries that the U.S. embassy essentially runs them.) The American embassy blocked every effort that Bosch made to organize public support. So, for example, land reform, labor organizing, anything that could have developed public support against a military which was pretty certain to try another coup — any such effort was blocked by the Kennedy Administration. As a result, the predicted military coup took place and Washington, which was essentially responsible for the success of the coup, shortly after it, recognized the new government. A typical military dictatorship of the type we like was established. In 1965, there was a coup by liberal, reformist officers, a constitutionalist coup, which threatened to restore democracy in the Dominican Republic, so we intervened again. That time we simply sent troops. A bloody and destructive war took place, many thousands of people were killed and we again succeeded in establishing a terror-and-torture regime. The country was also, incidentally, brought totally within the grip of
American corporations. The Dominican Republic was virtually bought up by Gulf and Western and other corporations after the coup. The country was totally demoralized. It was, in fact, subjected to terror and suffering, crushing poverty and so on. So then, we could have elections, because it was guaranteed that nothing could happen. They can even elect social democrats for all we care, the basic results having been achieved. The government would never be able to accomplish anything for its population, that is, for that part of the population which had not been killed or fled. In this region about 20 percent of the population has come to the United States, and in places where they have easier access, such as Puerto Rico, the figure is about 40 percent.

Well, let’s turn to El Salvador in connection with our attitude toward democratization. There were democratic elections in El Salvador in 1972 and 1977. In both cases the military intervened to abort them and installed military dictatorships. The people in Washington could not have cared less. There was no concern whatsoever. There were also the regular atrocities throughout this period, eliciting little concern in Washington. However, there were developments, two in fact, that did elicit concern in the late 1970’s. One was that the Somoza dictatorship fell in 1979. There is much mythology about this, but the fact of the matter is that Carter supported Somoza till the very end, even after the natural allies of the United States, the local business community, turned against him. That was a danger sign and it worried the U.S. with regard to El Salvador. There was another development that was even more dangerous. There were the beginnings of popular democratic organizations within El Salvador of the sort I mentioned earlier: Bible study groups turning into self-help groups; peasant cooperatives, unions, all sorts of organizations which seemed to be establishing the basis for a functioning democracy.

Now, anybody who thinks, realizes that democracy doesn’t mean much if people have to confront concentrated systems of economic power as isolated individuals. Democracy means something if people can organize to gain information, to have thoughts for that matter, to make plans, to enter into the political system in some active way, to put forth programs, and so on. If organizations of that kind exist, then democracy can exist too. Otherwise it’s a matter of pushing a lever every couple of years; it’s like having the choice between Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola. In El Salvador there were dangerous moves in this direction in the 1970’s with the development of what were called “popular organizations,” and therefore, something had to be done about them because there might be real democracy. We plainly don’t tolerate that.

These two developments did lead to some action on the part of the United States. In October 1979, the U.S. supported a reformist coup which overthrew the Romero dictatorship. There was, in fact, considerable fear that he was going to go the way of Somoza. Well, what happened then? The U.S. insisted that some of the harshest and most brutal military elements be predominantly placed in the junta. The killing rapidly increased right after the coup. By early 1980, the left Christian Democrats, socialists, and reformist military elements had been eliminated from or had simply fled from the junta, and the country was in the hands of the usual thugs that we install in our domains. Duarte came in at that time as a useful cover, to preside over one of the great Central American massacres. The archbishop, Archbishop Romero, pleaded with President Carter not to send military aid. The reasons were the following: he said that military aid would “sharpen the repression that has been unleashed against the people’s organizations fighting to defend their most fundamental human rights.” Therefore, he asked Carter not to send military aid. Well, of course, that was the very essence of American policy: namely, to increase massacre and repression, to destroy the popular organizations, and to prevent the achievements of human rights, so naturally the aid flowed and the war picked up steam. Archbishop Romero was assassinated shortly afterwards. In May 1980, under Carter remember, the war against the peasantry really took off in full force, largely under that guise of land reform.

The first major action was a joint operation of the Honduran and Salvadoran armies at the Rio Sumpul where about 600 people were killed as they tried to flee into Honduras. That massacre was suppressed by the American press for about 15 months, though it was published in the world press and the Church press, right here in Cambridge, for example. In fact, American press coverage during 1980 was unbelievably bad. In June 1980, the university in San Salvador was attacked and destroyed by the army. Many faculty and students were killed and much of the university facilities were simply destroyed and demolished. In November the political opposition was massacred. Meanwhile the independent media were destroyed.

This war had a number of significant successes. The popular organizations were destroyed; therefore we can now permit democratic elections — now that there is no concern anymore that they might mean something. These elections are carried out in “an atmosphere of terror and despair, of macabre rumor and grisly reality.” That was the assessment by the head of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, Lord Chithinis, with regard to the 1984 elections in El Salvador — rather different from the media coverage here, as you may recall. The point is that once the basis for democracy has been destroyed, once state terrorism has been firmly established, then elections are entirely permissible, even worthwhile, for the sake of American public opinion. The contrast between our alleged concern for elections today and our actual concern for elections in the 1970’s is, again, informative. Well, that was a success, namely destroying the popular organizations and so on. There was also, however, a failure.

The failure was that people began to join the guerillas. There were only a few hundred guerillas when all this began. They grew to many thousands during this period. Of course, that’s proof that the Russians are coming — anyone who understands the U.S. knows that. And, in fact, that is very similar to Vietnam in the 1950’s. If you think through what I’ve just described, what happened in El Salvador under Carter and what happened in Vietnam under Eisenhower are very similar.

Well, meanwhile, we stepped up our war against Nicaragua, not because Nicaragua is brutal and oppressive. Even if you accept the harshest
criticisms that have even a minimal basis in reality, by the standards of the
governments that we support,
Nicaragua is virtually a paradise. But
we attack Nicaragua precisely because
it is committed to a model of develop-
ment that we cannot tolerate. Of
Course this is presented as defense
against the Russians, and as proof that
it’s defense against the Russians, we
note that they receive weapons with
which they can defend themselves
against our attack. Foreign Minister
d’Escoto pointed out that it’s like “a
torturer who pulls out the fingernails
of his victim and then gets angry
because the victim screams in pain.”
Actually, a closer analogy would be a
thug who hires a goon squad to beat up
some kid in kindergarten who the thug
doesn’t like, and then begins whining
pitifully if the child raises his arms to
protect himself. That would be a pretty
accurate analogy to what’s happening
there.

Reagan’s problem is El Salvador is
very similar to Kennedy’s in South
Vietnam twenty years ago. There was
severe internal repression in both cases,
which was very successful in destroying
popular organizations, killing a lot of
people, and so on. However, the inter-
nal repression did elicit resistance
which the state that we had installed
was unable to control. Kennedy simply
attacked South Vietnam with bom-
bardment and defoliation. And
Reagan has been trying to do the same
in El Salvador for the last couple of
years, but he has not been quite able
to. He has been blocked by domestic
opposition. He has therefore been
forced to more indirect measures.
These have certainly succeeded in kill-
ing many people and causing vast
misery, but not yet in crushing the
resistance. We are still short of U.S.
Air Force bombings.

I’ve mentioned some of the similar-
ities. What are the differences? Well,
the main difference is that the United
States has changed. When Kennedy at-
tacked South Vietnam, there was no
protest, virtually none. That was in the
early 1960’s when Kennedy began the
direct military acts against South Viet-
nam. When Johnson escalated that at-
tack against South Vietnam to a full
scale land invasion, there was also very
little protest. In fact, protests reached a
significant scale only when several hun-
dred thousand American troops were
directly engaged in the war against

South Vietnam, a war which by then
extended well beyond.

In contrast, Reagan’s attempts to
escalate the war in El Salvador has met
with considerable popular opposition
here. And that’s significant. In fact,
that’s one of the most significant facts
of contemporary history.

I quoted before some of the Official
Views about the Vietnam War, from
the liberal doves: “excess of righteous-
ness and disinterested benevolence,”
and so on and so forth. However, there
was also a quite different view, a
popular view. As recently as 1982,
polls indicate that about 70 percent
of the American population regard the
Vietnam War not as a “mistake,” but
as “fundamentally wrong and im-
moral.” Many fewer opinion leaders
expressed that view, and virtually none
of the really educated class or arti-
culate intelligentsia ever took that
position. That incidentally is quite
typical. It’s typical for educated classes
to be more effectively controlled by the
indoctrination system to which they are
directly exposed, and in which they
play a sort of social role to its
purveyors, hence coming to internalize
it. So this degree of servility to the par-
ty line is not unique to this example.
But the point is there’s a split, a very
substantial split, between much of the
population and those who regard
themselves as its national leaders. That
is even given a technical name — it’s
called the “Vietnam Syndrome.”

Notice the term “syndrome,” as ap-
plied to a disease. The disease is that
there’s just a lot of people opposed to
massacre, aggression and torture, and
feel solidarity with the victims.
Therefore, something has to be done
about that. It was assumed in the early
1980’s that the disease had been cured,
and by reading the productions of the
educated classes, you would certainly
have believed that. But, in fact, the
disease was never very widespread
among the educated classes. However,
among the population, it remains
widespread and it’s a problem — it im-
pedes, in inhibits direct intervention
and aggression.

Whether this opposition, which is
quite real, can become sufficiently
organized and effective to block fur-
ther escalation — I don’t know. It
could be that the current level of attack
on the population of Central America
will suffice to achieve the major
American military ends. What is clear,
however, is that we’re living through
another chapter in a sordid and
shameful history of violence and terror
and oppression.

Unless we can muster the moral
courage and the honesty to understand
all of this, and to act to change it, as we
indeed can, then it’s going to continue
and there will be many millions of ad-
ditional victims who will face starva-
tion and torture, or outright massacre,
in what we will call “a crusade for
freedom.”
Most U.S. military assistance to the Central American and Caribbean countries is in the form of transfers of weapons and military-related equipment. El Salvador is the largest recipient of U.S. military assistance in Latin America and Honduras is second. U.S. military assistance to Guatemala has been limited since 1977 because of Guatemala’s record of human rights violations. The Reagan Administration has worked to end this restriction and the U.S. ambassador to Guatemala has promised that the spigot of U.S. assistance will be turned on fully following Guatemala’s 1985 elections. Examination shows that most U.S. arms transfers to the region are for counter-insurgency purposes.

Costa Rica. In FY 1984, U.S. military assistance to Costa Rica reached $9.2 million, a fourfold increase from FY 1983. From 1981 to 1983 the United States supplied the Costa Rican security forces with “non-lethal” military assistance, such as uniforms, field gear, communications and transport equipment. (Previous requests for military assistance by the Costa Ricans had been rejected by the Pentagon because Costa Rica has no standing army and U.S. law prohibits military assistance to foreign police forces.) The $9.2 million in FY 1984 and another $9.2 million in FY 1985 ushered in a new phase of U.S. military assistance, modernizing the Costa Rican security forces and making them more like professional armed forces. Transfers in

FY 1984 and FY 1985 include: M16 rifles, .50-caliber machine guns, 81 mm mortars, 90 mm recoilless rifles, M60 machine guns, helicopters and observation transport aircraft, as well as a new fleet of ground and river transport vehicles.

Contrast: Until October, 1984, when Congress put a freeze on funds for CIA assistance to the contras, the CIA supplied the contras with military equipment. U.S. journalists have seen the contras in their camps outfitted in made-in-U.S. uniforms. They have been shown crate upon crate of ammunition, grenade launchers and mortars marked from Florida and from Massachusetts as well as U.S.-made light antitank weapons and machine guns. (Journalists have also been shown Soviet rocket-propelled grenade launchers and AK-47 automatic rifles believed captured and provided by Israel from Palestine Liberation Organization spoils and Belgian-made rifles, which were the standard issue of the Honduran Army before the United States began supplying them with M60s.) Despite a congressional prohibition against Pentagon assistance to the contras since December 1982, three Cessna O-2 aircraft used in bombing raids in September, 1984, have been traced to the Pentagon via the CIA; mines placed in Nicaragua’s harbors under CIA direction in early Spring, 1984, were fabricated with assistance from the U.S. Navy.

Eastern Caribbean: Before its invasion of Grenada the United States had a small program of military assistance to the Caribbean island nations, primarily to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. Following the invasion the United States implemented an extensive training program in the Eastern Caribbean, accompanied by the transfer of an array of arms and military equipment, including M16 rifles, submachine guns, grenade launchers, small arms, telecommunications systems, radio equipment, vehicles and uniforms, as well as three thirty-two-foot deepwater coast guard vessels to Antigua, Dominica, and St. Lucia. This training and equipment have significantly altered the potential of local police forces and incorporated the coast guard into regional security plans.

El Salvador

“We see the local garrison from here” (pointing to a nearby hill where modern barracks are visible) “and every time we see a truck arrive, we think it may contain the bullets that will be used against us at any moment.”

Young Indian from western El Salvador to North American visitors

The Salvadoran armed forces have been modernized with U.S. weapons, aircraft, ammunition and other military equipment, including “expandable and sustaining” items such as ammunition, bombs, rifles, boots and other personal equipment, vehicular transportation and communications gear. The aircraft have improved the mobility of the army and increased the bombing capabilities of the Salvadoran Air Force. In June, 1982, the United States supplied six A-37 bombers as well as reconnaissance aircraft, helicopters and transports. Maintenance of the aircraft has been done routinely by U.S. technicians in El Salvador and in the United States. Following the March, 1984, election of President Jose Napoleon Duarte, the U.S. Congress permitted an additional $70 million for FY 1984 for military assistance, the bulk of it “to buy aircraft and equipment to enhance rather than simply sustain current operations.” By September, 1984, ten new helicopters had arrived; by January, 1985, ten to fifteen more were anticipated, raising the total from about eighteen in Spring, 1984, to nearly forty. The new helicopters, with construction of a helicopter base at San Miguel, will greatly increase the number of troops that can be brought into a combat area with little advance notice. The Administration also announced plans to introduce a Vietnam-era gunship known as Puff the Magic Dragon. Puff spews out 18,000 rounds per minute, a very high density of fire. Congressional and public outcry forced the Administration to modify its plans; instead of Puff, the Pentagon purchased in the United States two C-47 aircraft, and converted one to a gunship with night-vision equipment, flares, and three .50-caliber machine guns able to fire at a combined rate of 1500 rounds per minute. The planes cost $1.5 million. Although two conversion kits were provided, the second plane was not to be used until performance evaluation by Congress. In January, 1985, it appeared that

Bombed house following attack by the Salvadoran Air Force, Tenancingo, El Salvador. Anonymous
Salvadorans had fixed the second C-47 with a machine gun and that it was being used. In March, 1984, the U.S. Congress approved use of the second gunship. Twelve Salvadoran soldiers were trained in the United States to form two six-man crews.

The Salvadoran armed forces are dependent on the United States not only for modernization of their arsenal, but also for spare parts and for maintenance. U.S. technicians maintain the aircraft as well as repair even the most basic equipment. Frequently transfers of rifles, howitzers, grenades, machine-guns, mortars, trucks, aircraft and communications gear include one year of spare parts. An inspection of the U.S.-trained Atlacatl Brigade in Spring, 1984, found that twenty percent of its M16s were out of action and that they were not cleaned regularly; radio hand sets were not properly used and had to be sent to the United States for even minor repairs.

The Salvadoran army suffers continuously from low morale and high turnover. In order to lower the fear of battle by reducing what had been an extraordinarily high rate of deaths from battlefield wounds, the United States provides military medical assistance, including ambulances, evacuation helicopters, medical trainers and funds for a field hospital at San Miguel.

Failure of the Salvadoran army to reduce the activities of the insurgents has forced the adoption of a strategy of air war. A pattern of repeated bombings coupled with continuation of army search and destroy tactics is resulting in significant numbers of civilian killings, casualties and displacement. When Dr. John Constable, a member of a medical delegation returned to the United States from El Salvador in September, 1984, he reported: "I interviewed a large number of refugees and asked them, among other things, the cause of their being driven out. Persistent bombing was usually given as the reason, particularly when this was reported as occurring daily, or at least almost every day, for prolonged periods. Some informants, however, felt that the bombing alone was unlikely to drive people from their traditional lands and that it was nearly always necessary to add military ground activity in order to accomplish this. There was repeated and consistent testimony that government soldiers routinely destroyed buildings, eliminated crops, and killed livestock as well as killing and injuring the people. No one, government or other, suggested that the activities of the guerrillas were responsible for driving people out." America's Watch and other human rights groups have referred to the pattern of bombings as "indiscriminate." In his August 14, 1983, homily Monsignor Arturo Rivera y Damas, Archbishop of San Salvador, stated: "Others had to leave their villages because of military operations by land and air, with indiscriminate bombing, where those who died were not the guerrillas but the undefended civilians, among them women, children and old people."

In March, 1984, at the time of the Salvadoran presidential elections, there was a threefold increase in the number of aerial sorties from ten a day in February, 1984, to thirty. The bombing was supported by the arrival in Honduras of the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion, which flies OV-10 reconnaissance flights over El Salvador, by C-130 intelligence-gathering flights originating in Panama, and by AWAC (Airborne Warning and Control System) reconnaissance missions from the United States. Refugees arriving in Honduras as late as May, 1984, testified that the bombing had not abated. One refugee testified: "Since Duarte's election there are more bombing and military operations. When they (government soldiers) find people in houses they kill them." The Salvadoran military has said it would report a total of five more C-47s and ten Hughes 500 helicopters equipped with rapid fire "miniguns" like those used in Vietnam; four Hughes 500s are in the pipeline. Such aircraft will radically increase the fire-power of the Salvadoran military, heightening the violence.

The Salvadoran arsenal now contains 250-, 500- and 750-lb. bombs which leave huge craters in the ground. "Iron" fragmentation bombs which explode above ground allowing hunks of metal shrapnel to be hurled in a wide circumference, napalm-like incendiary bombs, and white phosphorous target markers which have been used as anti-personnel weapons. Injuries, especially burns from incendiary bombs, are often fatal because of the lack of medical facilities in rural El Salvador.

Israel, Argentina, Brazil and Western European countries also have supplied arms to El Salvador.

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Guatemala

In mid-1981 the Guatemalan government began to purchase significant quantities of items through Commercial Sales. These items are officially designated as non-military, but they are used by the armed forces for military purposes. Examples of such items are: shotguns, crime investigation equipment, handcuffs, a surveillance camera, a psychological stress analyzer. Also since mid-1981, significant equipment for military use has been purchased through the Commerce Department. Two such sales were very controversial: the sale of fifty two-and-a-half ton trucks and 100 jeeps in June, 1981—items the Commerce Department removed from the "Crime Control and Detection" list and placed on another list to make the sale legal; and in 1981 and 1982 the sale of twenty-three Bell civilian-model helicopters for a total of $25 million.

The threat to reimpose U.S. government military assistance, however, began in earnest in January, 1983, when the Administration announced its intention to authorize $6 million in helicopter spare parts and communications gear for the Guatemalan air force. Nestor Sanchez, Deputy Secretary of Defense for Inter-American Affairs, defended this move: "Yes, we know this equipment will be used to help combat insurgency, but we hope it will also be used for nation-building and social progress." A wary Congress, however, was not persuaded. That year only minor military support was provided: aircraft maintenance at Corpus Christi, Texas, and Howard Air Force Base, Panama, and the sale of spare parts for combat vehicles.

In 1984 the Administration renewed its efforts and showed its intentions by circumventing Congress and sending $2 million in spare parts for UH-1H helicopters through the Foreign Military Sales cash program. In mid-year the Administration requested $10 million on Foreign Military Sales credits. For FY 1985; Congress, however, upheld its prohibition on Foreign Military Sales credits. For FY 1986 the Administration is requesting $10 million in Foreign Military Sales credits.

Guatemala is the only country in the region to have a munitions plant. The plant manufactures bullets for Israeli-made Galil rifles, the standard issue of the Guatemalan armed forces. An annex to the plant produces parts for armored vehicles.

Western European countries, as well as Israel, Taiwan, Brazil, Argentina and Yugoslavia have exported arms, aircraft and military-related equipment to Guatemala.
“WHICH PLEDGE SHOULD I SIGN?”

Many potential pledge signers ask this question. Obviously when we sign a pledge, that
decision is a personal one, and we each have our own reasons for doing so. Therefore, you may or
may not find the following helpful as a guide in making that decision.

Some pledge signers have expressed the concern that they are interested in doing civil
disobedience, but can not do it all the time and are therefore confused about which pledge to
sign. Very few pledge signers can do actions which will definitely result in arrest every time
there is a demonstration. Each time there is a national signal calling for civil disobedience, or
the local Pledge decides that it is time to act, each affinity group decides on its participation,
and each person in that affinity group decides on how to participate. Every person looks at her or
his personal situation, commitment, and the urgency of what is happening in Central America,
and makes a decision.

Taking the above into consideration:

* signing the civil disobedience pledge implies a strong opposition to what the U.S. government is
doing in Central America resulting in a willingness to do actions which may result in arrest, and a
belief that stronger protest needs to be done to stop United States intervention in Central
America.

* signing the witness and support pledge is a commitment to protest the U.S. government role in
Central America in a legal manner. It also implies a willingness to support those choosing to do
civil disobedience, while for whatever reason, being unable or unwilling to do civil disobedience
oneself. It shows a deep belief that what the U.S. government is doing in Central America is
wrong and needs to be stopped.

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**The Pledge of Civil Disobedience**

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Central America, I pledge to join with others to engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience as my conscience leads me at U.S. federal facilities, including U.S. federal buildings, military installations, Congressional offices, offices of the Central Intelligence Agency, the State Department, and other appropriate places. I pledge to engage in nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt the death and destruction which such U.S. military action causes the people of Central America.

**The Pledge of Witness and Support**

If the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Central America, I pledge to join with others to engage in acts of legal protest as my conscience leads me, including such actions as participating in demonstrations, vigils, leafletting, and appeals to Congress and the White House. I also pledge to demonstrate my support for those who engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience in order to prevent or halt further death and destruction in Central America.
PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE

History, Structure & Decision-Making

For decades, the people of Central America have faced the terror of daily violence. Brutal dictatorships, death squads, and powerful militaries created and reinforced a condition of repression, poverty, and hunger throughout the region. Currently, armed conflicts are being waged in four countries: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Honduras. Since 1979, over 70,000 people have died in these wars. In each case, the United States plays a significant role. Now this violence is escalating as the U.S. military presence widens in Central America—and as the possibility of a full-scale U.S. invasion increases.

In the midst of this situation, Central American teachers, labor leaders, farmers, and church people appeal to U.S. citizens to change current U.S. policy toward this region. They have urgently called us to help stop the bombing, incursions, paramilitary aggression, and spy overflights which contribute to the reign of terror in these countries. They ask us to do all in our power to reverse the U.S. government’s plan to paralyze the forces for social change in the region, including its plan to openly intervene.

In response to this possibility—and in honoring the appeal being made by our sisters and brothers in Central America—tens of thousands of people across the United States are publicly repudiating U.S. policy in the region by signing the “Pledge of Resistance,” a commitment to engage in acts of nonviolent civil disobedience and/or legal protest in the wake of significant U.S. military escalation in Central America. These people, acting on their highest moral, religious, or civic principles, sign the “Pledge of Resistance”—a pledge to engage in acts of nonviolent resistance if the United States invades, bombs, sends combat troops, or otherwise significantly escalates its intervention in Nicaragua or El Salvador. If such circumstances should occur, our nonviolent action will bring the issue dramatically before the American people, will pressure Congress to act, and will signal the unwillingness of thousands of U.S. citizens to support this war.

The “Pledge of Resistance” was inspired by the pledge written and signed by 53 peace and justice activists at the Kirkridge Retreat Center in Pennsylvania in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Grenada. The Kirkridge co-signers promised that, in the event of a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua, they would attempt to travel to the war zone and stand nonviolently with the Nicaraguan people. They further pledged that, if for any reason they were prevented from taking this action, they would then nonviolently occupy key U.S. federal facilities until the invasion was halted.

In the August 1984 issue of Sojourners magazine, a call was issued by a wide range of religious and peace groups inviting thousands of U.S. citizens to make a pledge of nonviolent resistance to a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua—and to begin actively drawing up a “contingency plan” of nonviolent opposition to such an action. Immediately, groups and individuals across the United States began organizing local pledge campaigns. In every region of the country, people began developing local plans of action based on the national call, to designate churches and other sites as gathering places in the event of U.S. military escalation, to collect “pledges of resistance” in cities and towns everywhere, and to begin nonviolence preparation for vigils and sit-ins planned for congressional field offices, federal buildings, and the White House.

On October 16, 1984, organizers representing major peace, justice, and anti-interventionist groups met at the Sojourners office in Washington to shape the scope and direction of the emerging contingency plan. (The following groups were represented at the meeting: Witness for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, American Friends Service Committee, SANE, the Emergency Response Network, the Nuclear Weapons Freeze campaign, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, the National Network in Solidarity with Nicaragua, the Chicago Religious Task Force, the Presbyterian Church, Maryknoll, the Interreligious Task Force on Central America, Mobilization for Survival, Sojourners, World Peacemakers, the Mennonite Church, the Central America Peace Campaign, and the Episcopal Peace Fellowship.)

At this meeting, it was decided to expand the “Pledge of Resistance” to respond to a U.S. invasion or a major military escalation anywhere in Central America. Decisions about organization were also made.
NATIONAL PLEDGE STRUCTURE

Nationally, the Pledge is structured with the Signal Group, Executive Committee, National Clearinghouse, Regional and State Coordinators, and Local Groups.

The Signal Group is made up of policy analysts and leaders of constituencies. They put out "signals" to the entire network indicating that all Pledge groups should be activated.

They call for mobilizations in response to invasions or significant escalations. Criterion for significant escalations are:
1. The signal group believes a significant escalation has occurred.
2. That significant numbers of Pledge signers will understand that this escalation has occurred and will want to act.
3. That there is a realistic possibility our message can be conveyed to the public so they will be moved to act.

The Signal Group receives input from the Executive Committee and Regional Coordinators.

The Signal Group includes: Jim Wallis (Sojourners), Susana Cepeda (SANE), Tim McDonald (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), Bill Wifler (Human Rights Office/National Council of Churches), Debbie Reuben (National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People), Mary Lou Kownacki (Pax Christi USA), Ken Butigan (Emergency Response Network), Pat Rumer (United Church Board for World Ministries), Angie Berryman (AFSC), and Margaret Hilpert (Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America), and several others (Summer 1985).

The Executive Committee calls for actions and activities such as educational campaigns and network builders. Their function is to:
- develop the network
- plan educational and developmental activities, e.g. the double the pledge campaign comes from the Executive Committee
- deal with structural problems and clarify issues
- oversee the work of the national clearinghouse
- plan and execute fundraising strategy

The National Clearinghouse is located at the Interreligious Task Force on Central America, 475 Riverside Dr., Rm. 563, New York, New York 10115, (212) 870-2057. It:
- communicates signals, calls and information to regional and state coordinators
- works with the executive committee
- is the contact for national organizations, religious bodies and international groups
- is the contact for national press

Regional Coordinators:
- communicate information to state coordinators and local groups
- do outreach and development in their region
- are the regional press contact
- do regional fundraising
- make recommendations on national strategy and action to executive committee and signal group

The regional coordinators for IL, IN, MI, OH, MO, IA are Grace Gyori and Jeri Seese–Green, 3913 N. St. Louis, Chicago, IL, 60618, (312) 267-7881.

State Coordinators:
- communicate information from the Signal Group, Executive Committee, and regional coordinators to the local Pledge groups
- give feedback to the regional coordinators from local pledge groups

Local Pledge Groups are the people which make the Pledge work, the grassroots. They:
- decide how to implement the signals and calls which they receive
- execute their own ideas and plans
- form structures based on their situation, network and participants
- fundraise
- do press work for their area
- give input to the National Pledge through their State and Regional Coordinators

The Pledge Coordinator for Chicago is the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America (CRTFCA), 407 S. Dearborn, Rm. 370, Chicago, IL, 60605, (312) 663-4398. Information on the Pledge in Chicago follows.
THE PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE IN CHICAGO

In Chicago, the first meeting around the Pledge of Resistance was called by the Chicago coordinators of the Pledge, the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, in August of 1984. The participants began forming "Pledge of Resistance" groups in their areas or making the Pledge an aspect of their continuing Central America work.

At the time of this writing, Pledge Affinity Groups in the Chicago Metropolitan Area include Synapses, Wellington Ave. United Church of Christ, Lakeview Presbyterian, Wheadon United Methodist Church, No Pasaran Women's Affinity Group, Lesbian & Gay Men, Rosa Luxemburg Club, Unexpected News, Chicago Committee in Solidarity with the People of Nicaragua, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, Southside Religious Task Force on Central America, Northside Religious Task Force on Central America, Uptown Task Force on Central America, South Suburbs, Far West Side, Oak Park, and the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America. The groups are autonomous. They each decide who their representatives on the city-wide council are, how to pursue pledge goals, when to call meetings, and how to take part in city-wide actions.

Preventive actions, and actions in response to the present level of U.S. intervention, are planned by the groups for their areas and by the city-wide Pledge of Resistance. For example, one group pickets the post office as the federal facility in the area as a way to conscientize the community and protest the U.S. government's role in Central America. Others banner on over-passes of expressways with signs, such as "NO CONTRA AID". One conducted a 30 day vigil with flower pots commemorating the dead in the federal plaza, while another had a coffee-vigil where Nicaraguan coffee was given out as a way to defy the embargo. Another affinity group sat-in on Senator Dixon's office before the contra aid vote in March of 1985.

Affinity groups, the basic unit of actions, are continually forming and taking on increasingly important functions in this effort to end the U.S. role in the war in Central America (see section on affinity groups).

Decisions are made by a council of representatives of affinity groups which meet twice a month. The following lays out in detail the Chicago Pledge structure.
1. The basic unit of action is the affinity group.

2. Affinity groups:
   a. convene themselves;
   b. discuss and decide how to participate in actions;
   c. arrange for the training of their group;
   d. work out who will do civil disobedience and who will do support for actions;
   e. appoint a representative to a coordinating council, taking into account criterion listed below;
   f. report back to the council for coordination (see #3).

3. A council composed of one representative with one alternate from each affinity group:
   a. meets twice a month to develop, direct, organize, and lead pledge actions;
   b. appoints a steering committee of 5 people to meet weekly, one member is be from the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America (CRTFCA);
   c. is responsible to see that work generated is completed;
   d. informs affinity groups about Pledge actions and activities;
   e. generates discussion of issues and ideas to be taken back to affinity groups;
   f. gathers feedback from affinity groups for evaluation purposes;
   g. takes on the responsibility of daily tasks of the pledge organizing, including:
      * fund raise, see that expenses do not exceed revenue
      * maintain list of pledge names
      * organize phone trees and phone banking
      * form new affinity groups
      * organize training sessions
      * produce educational materials
      * develop, produce, and send out mailings
      * contact press – press releases, press calls, press spokespeople
      * arrange for legal needs
   h. decides by consensus whenever possible, when not possible it is with a 2/3 vote;
   i. plans periodic meetings where all pledge signers can participate in discussion of goals, how to set up affinity groups, and other subjects.

4. Criterion For Council Members:
   a. Represent affinity group of a minimum of 10 people:
      1. who have signed the Pledge of Resistance;
      2. the affinity group contributes a minimum of 5 hours/week of work into tasks enumerated in #3g
   b. The same person should consistently represent the affinity group with one alternate representative from each affinity group;

5. Overall Coordination:

   The CRTFCA is the Chicago Pledge of Resistance Coordinator, and maintains communications with Regional and National Pledge of Resistance, makes day to day decisions, and coordinates the work done by the affinity groups and volunteers.