



\* GUASO \*

# GUATEMALA UPDATE

February 1984

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## THE KISSINGER REPORT: PRETEXT FOR INTERVENTION

On January 11th the Kissinger Commission issued its long awaited report. Although it acknowledges that "the U.S. has been involved, sometimes intimately, in the affairs of Central America for more than a century," it carefully avoids any criticism of this involvement. But when it comes to proposals for the future, the report is not so reticent. It has three major recommendations: an \$8 billion aid program, a massive increase in U.S. military involvement, and linking military aid to improvements in human rights. In other words, the report has something for everybody. Its political purpose is to offer mainline Democrats a rationale for supporting Reagan's policies, thus removing Central America as an issue in the 1984 elections, and giving Reagan a free hand during a critical period.

Let us examine the report's recommendations: Reagan has already demonstrated his opposition to the linkage to human rights with his pocket veto of the certification process for continued aid to El Salvador and he announced his opposition to this portion of the Commission's findings. On the other hand, Congress seems unlikely to pass the aid package considering the sorry state of the federal budget. Thus the report boils down to a call for increased U.S. military involvement in Central America. To justify this, the report notes that the region faces both an economic and political crisis which have given rise to insurgency movements. Unfortunately a hostile power controls the insurgents and is using them to try and deal the U.S. a major strategic setback. Hence the United States must intervene.

In describing the region's economic crisis, the report argues that "the nations of the hemisphere...advanced remarkably throughout the 1960's and 1970's... But then the situation turned down" with energy costs up amidst a world wide recession. As a result, "poverty is on the rise everywhere in Latin America." This is the only reference to the causes of poverty in the report. It does acknowledge "the questionable practices followed by the fruit companies," which led to "the fear of 'economic imperialism that to some degree still persists among Central Americans.'" But overall, "whatever the mistakes of the past, private U.S. investment in the region now plays a vital and constructive role." Although the report pays some minimum lip service to the need for social justice, the bottom line is that "there must be encouragement of those incentives that liberate and energize a free economy."

GUASO believes that this is an extremely sanitized version of the devastating impact of U.S. investment in the region. We need only to refer to the recent book "Bitter Fruit" by Schlessinger and Kinzer for the gorey details.

In describing the region's political crisis, the report concedes that there are legitimate causes of unrest, and says: "Authentically indigenous changes, and even indigenous revolutions, are not incompatible with international harmony in the Americas...if they are truly indigenous. The U.S. can have no quarrel with democratic decisions, as long as they are not the result of foreign pressures and external machinations."

If the U.S. were to adopt these principles as the basis of its foreign policy towards the region, it would mean the abrupt reversal of 100 years of U.S. actions, i.e., no more invasions of Grenada or the Dominican Republic, no more CIA coups against Guatemala, no more destabilization campaigns against Chile, etc. etc. The U.S. has never practiced these principles. Any time that countries in the region have interfered with the freedom of U.S. corporate investments, or tried to lessen U.S. domination, the U.S. has moved against them immediately. Given the Commission's failure to criticize past U.S. policy, it is difficult to believe they seriously intend it to change.

(cont.)

KISSINGER REPORT (cont.)...

The report repeatedly uses the alleged "non-indigenous, Cuban and Soviet backed" character of popular revolutions as justification for stepped up military intervention. It is striking that "outside intervention" has always been the U.S. excuse for its own intervention long before the Soviet Union or Cuba ever existed. This goes back to the Monroe Doctrine; it was also Teddy Roosevelt's rationale for his "big stick" policy. The report argues that "unless the externally supported insurgencies are checked and the violence curbed, progress on these other fronts (i.e., economic and political reforms) will be elusive." In other words, military victory first, before the reforms which will supposedly win over Central America's hearts and minds. But as Guatemala in the 1960's shows, once an insurgency is crushed, serious motivation for reform fades quickly.

Since the U.S. is a "great power" with global interests to "defend", the report concludes that the U.S. must intervene: if the U.S. cannot prevail in its own "backyard", then its credibility everywhere will be in doubt. We believe, on the contrary, that the essential question is the Central American people's right to self-determination. If the U.S. is unable to reconcile itself to this reality, the historical record is plain: the right to self-determination is a fundamental political force that has been shaking the world for decades. It has led to the collapse of all the European colonial empires, to French defeat in Indochina and Algeria, and to U.S. defeat in Vietnam, Nicaragua, and elsewhere. Should Reagan press forward, we can add his Central American misadventure to the list of history's bloodbaths which, tragically, need not have happened at all.

SLIDE SHOW/LECTURE ON GUATEMALAN TEXTILES

The Seattle Mingi Society and the Women's Information Center at the U.W. are sponsoring a presentation called, "If You Have Ever Loved Cloth of Guatemala." The event will take place Monday, February 6th at 7:30 at the Ethnic Cultural Center, 3940 Brooklyn Ave. N.E. in the Chicano Room. In addition to the lecture, there will also be a weaving demonstration and textile display. A donation will be requested at the door. For more information call 525-1838.

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