

COMMENTARY

More death

Reagan encourages continuing military aid

By GINIE LYNCH

First it was a Salvadoran archbishop, then four American nuns and a few U.S. citizens here and there and now most recently, a U.S. Navy officer has been added to the VIP death list in the Salvadoran civil war. Despite the rising death toll (the number of Salvadorans killed has reached approximately 100,000), the Reagan administration continues to foster the notion that military aid is the best solution to solve the Salvadoran crisis.

It seems ironic that the U.S. government, renowned for its democratic traditions, would actually support the government of the military backed dictatorship in El Salvador. The Reagan administration's frighteningly simplistic way of dealing with the problems in El Salvador and indeed all of Central America, by reinforcing the role of the military in a region resisting the military's repressiveness, only further serves to illustrate its inability to see the crisis in more than one dimension. Guns, ammunition, military advisers and millions of our taxpayers' dollars—these are the methods the Reagan administration deems best to solve the civil war in El Salvador. There is no attempt to pursue negotiations between the leftist guerrillas and the rightest military backed government. It appears that the current administration almost fears such negotiations. An example of this fear, is the transferral of Thomas Enders, the assistant secretary for Inter-American Affairs, away from El Salvador because he favored talks with the Salvadoran rebels. Enders, interestingly enough, was known for his hardline stance against Communists. One can't help but wonder just what Langhorne A. Motley, his replacement and the current Ambassador to Brazil, will be like.

For if El Salvador is ever to have a stable democracy, negotiations must take place. There is no other viable solution. The internal struggle of too much land and wealth in the hands of too few is the historical lynchpin of the Salvadoran crisis. But getting the landed oligarchy—the real power behind the current government which is supported by the military—to agree to the implementation of reforms for the poor (one of the basic aims of the guerrillas' platform) will be extremely difficult. This would be to go against the status quo grain they've held historically for generations. Nevertheless, some attempt to compromise must be initiated soon. It is doubtful that this will happen as long as our own North American "dictator" (Ronald Reagan) stays in power.

In terms of El Salvador, Reagan administration could do well



to heed the words of Abraham Lincoln: "Whenever there is a conflict between human rights and property rights, human rights must prevail." But the Reagan administration is much more interested in continuing its outdated foreign policies than helping the plight of the Salvadoran people. So we will continue to send economic and military aid to this tiny war-scorned nation to keep communism out of El Salvador and all of Central America to "safeguard Democracy." Democracy for whom? Obviously not democracy for the Salvadoran people. And there is really something bothersome about this definition which implies that all conflicts in this region be viewed in terms of East-West confrontations. We no longer live in an isolated bipolar world, and it is not necessary for the Reagan administration to cry the "Communism wolf" every time there is a problem in Central America, unless one can be certain of real Soviet subversion. Maybe this is Reagan's way of handling a situation that is too complex for him to understand.

It follows that the greatest threat to democracy in El Salvador and in the entire Central American region is the current administration's backward foreign policy. Need we so quickly forget some of the basic principles upon which our own government was formed? Doesn't the notion exist that when the government is unjust, that revolt may be necessary and preferable to tyranny? And should we be so frightened at the word "revolutionary"? George McGovern, speaking to UNC students in the fall of 1981, said that revolution in El Salvador is somewhat comparable to our own; that if we were living in El Salvador today, we'd probably

be fighting with the guerillas too.

Thomas Jefferson, one of our nation's founding fathers, would certainly be considered a radical if he were alive today. Jefferson said, "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God." He also said, "Laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. Each generation has the right to choose for itself the form of government it believes the most promotive of its own happiness." The Reagan administration should listen to his wise words to deal with the Salvadoran crisis.

One would prefer to believe that Reagan's inept foreign policy in El Salvador and all of Central America is more a result of ignorance than anything else. But reappraisal of our actions in El Salvador is still vital. If we as a government choose to get involved in El Salvador, why not help negotiate for a peaceful, viable alternative to the violent bloody road already paved?

If the Reagan administration does not learn to listen to our Latin American neighbors and carefully weigh the implications of military aid to impose our kind of "order," then what small amount of credibility we have in this area will probably be shattered. Let us rather use our tools of foreign diplomacy wisely so that we do not make a mockery of our own democratic ideals. The recent death of another North American in El Salvador should only make us aware of and able to question U.S. military aid to El Salvador.

Ginie Lynch, who graduated from UNC this spring, is from Richmond, Va. She is a staff writer for The Tar Heel.

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