Reagan's invocation of the Soviet menace certainly makes good politics in the United States, but is of little value in Latin America. Why, have the Soviets not attacked Costa Rica, another economically weak Central American nation with a government favorable to the United States? The task would be easier than in El Salvador, since Costa Rica has not mustered an army since 1948. The potential payoff is much greater, since Costa Rica borders both Panama and the Caribbean. The Soviets' opportunity is denied by the lack of a cause to unite the people against their government and thus allow outside influence. The Soviet foothold in El Salvador, if it does exist, is based not on its cunning and guile but on the United States' negligence and tacit support of oppression.

The president may actually believe his own rhetoric, but it is not difficult to perceive the true issues in El Salvador. Reagan is fond of rattling off the names of US cities closer to San Salvador than Washington. The Reagan administration considers Latin America the United States' "front yard," in which US interests must be protected from any attempt to take precedence over local considerations. It is important that these seas remain open to US ships than that Salvadoran peasants be allowed to live humbly by their government.

Reagan sternly asks how the United States' allies can have faith in a nation which cannot maintain "democracy" in El Salvador. If, indeed, the United States cannot bully a small banana republic, how can it expect the other Latin American nations to maintain "democracy" in El Salvador? If indeed, the United States position on El Salvador is not new, of course; it is the same problem that has always afflicted US Latin American policy. It is the notion that regional issues are strictly secondary to superpower conflicts, whether that region be Southeast Asia or Latin America. What is ironic is that this policy, by ignoring nationalist influences in client nations, actually aids the Soviets through its cultivation of anti-United States sentiment.

The recent nomination of former Democratic Senator Richard Stone to the post of ambassador-at-large to El Salvador provides an illustration of how US policies dominate Latin American policy. Ostensibly a mediator who will attempt to bring the left in political settlement, Stone, in fact, once a lobbyist for the right-wing dictatorship of Guatemala. His appointment satisfies the liberal demand for such an ambassador in exchange for continued military aid, while his political leanings are acceptable to the conservatives. It is clear, however, that Stone is in no sense acceptable. His nomination serves no purpose other than to assure House Democrats that they are doing something to foster negotiations, which, in reality, can be confident no serious negotiations will take place.

What can the United States do in El Salvador? Many Latin American nations might suggest the United States could do no better than to get out of the region and stay out, but a sincere effort might be welcomed. Some suggestions:

- De-emphasize the anti-Soviet/Cuban rhetoric. If the Red menace is real, it is a result of the United States' failure to export democracy, not the Soviets' ability to export revolution. This strategy is failing, and is resulting in the other Latin American nations, whose cooperation is necessary to achieve real progress, bringing peace to El Salvador.
- De-emphasize US politics in addressing the Latin American problem. Imposing the United States will only develop nations in strictly a short-term strategy. Those who make peaceful revolution impossible make violent revolution inevitable.
- Demand that the murder of non-combatants ceases immediately, and accompany this demand with the threat of total cutoff of US aid if the slaughter does not stop. The US has long claimed to be a champion of human rights. It is now time to back that claim with action.
- Engage in negotiations with all Latin American nations, including Cuba and Nicaragua, on key issues. Such talks have been called for by countries aligned with both superpowers. US intervention in this regard is eroding its support in Latin America, support already damaged by the US position on the Falklands war and its support for anti-Sandinist rebels.

There can, unfortunately, be little hope that a sensible policy towards Central America will evolve under the current administration. The president is too old to change his mind, a condition he is fond of noting. Any changes made will have to be at the instigation of a Congress unwilling to dictate a foreign policy in the first place, and fearful of the political implications if such a policy fails. With its reserve army and rampant corruption, the El Salvadoran government seems likely to fail regardless of what is done by the United States, short of sending in the Marines.

Should the Salvadoran government fall, the president will certainly claim he made every effort to extend military aid to avert such a failure. The burden of proof will then be on his opposition to demonstrate that military aid to a corrupt and repressive government is a less desirable alternative than a possible Soviet client in Central America. Will the Democrats risk entering a congressional campaign crippled by their opposition to an "affable" president, or improving economy, and the moral for the loss of yet another nation to the specter of Soviet hegemony?

Let us hope so.

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**Publication Schedule: Summer 1983**

This is The Tech's last regular issue this semester. There will be no issues during final weeks.

**Commencement Issue:** Friday, May 27

**Summer Issues:**
- Tuesday, June 14
- Thursday, July 7
- Tuesday, July 26
- Tuesday, August 16

**Orientation Week:**
- Friday, September 2
- Tuesday, September 6
- Friday, September 9

The Tech will continue regular publication on the first day of classes, September 13, 1983.

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