

# **U.S. Out of the Americas!**

**Shoot down all their helicopters!**

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)

1984

How could anyone fail to notice the sickening irony in the announcement from U.S. Secretary of State George Schultz that no reprisals would be taken against Nicaragua for shooting down an unmarked U.S. military helicopter and killing the pilot at the Honduras-Nicaragua border? Such a declaration is roughly equivalent to a bully saying he won't retaliate for your biting his toe while he's stomping your face in.

How could the U.S. talk in any terms about "reprisals"? How could these liars speak of this incident as "reckless" and "unprovoked" without flinching? In the Fall the U.S. marines invaded tiny Grenada as a mopping-up operation against a nationalist regime in chaos, both to test the waters of public opinion over further direct U.S. military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to warn Nicaragua and Cuba in no uncertain terms of its intentions. (As if they needed any warning!)

When government officials were asked about possible invasion plans for Nicaragua, they refused to rule out the possibility, making it clear that they would back an invasion by neighboring El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. Meanwhile, they continue to openly finance and advise the army made up of thousands of ex-somocista mercenaries attacking from Honduras and Costa Rica in their so-called "secret" war.

The right-wing contras, armed with material left behind from the provocative U.S. Big Pine I military maneuvers in Honduras, and aided by the scores of CIA agents assigned to Honduras, have brought the death squad strategy to Nicaragua. They are waging a war not only against the Sandinista government, but against the whole of Nicaraguan society. The poor peasants and workers of the border regions bear the brunt of the U.S. crusade for "democracy." Perpetrating every imaginable atrocity—torture, murder, rape, disemboweling and decapitation of victims, cutting off breasts and hands to be hung from the branches of trees, etc.—the contras are making it plain what the U.S. rulers and their cohorts have in mind for the Nicaraguan people if they get their way.

Honduras has already been invaded by the U.S.; objections to some future U.S. military intervention in the region are outdated. Honduras has been transformed into a permanent network of air strips capable of servicing U.S. war planes in this widening conflict. Thousands of U.S. troops, taking part in Big Pine II, could march on Managua at any time, though it should be obvious that the Nicaraguans, who lost 50,000 people in the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship, will not capitulate so readily as the Grenadans. U.S. planes could strike at Managua in minutes, while warships threaten quarantine and bombardment from both seas.

## **Forced Evacuations and Extermination**

In El Salvador and Guatemala the mass exterminations of poor peasants, Indians and opponents of the regimes are an everyday reality. Literally tens of thousands of people—sometimes entire villages of indigenous peoples, entire language groups and cultures—have been murdered, and tens of thousands more have been forced to flee their lands.

Furthermore, such nightmarish dimensions of violence are not new; the forced evacuations and exterminations of entire villages are a direct continuation of the slaughter of indigenous peoples and poor farmers everywhere in the Americas, stemming all the way back to the European conquests. But the toll has been particularly high in Central America.

This legacy of brutalization has even come to shape the contours of resistance to this mechanized monster and its thugs. There should thus be no illusions about the nature of the opposition groups. The Salvadoran opposition is an amalgam of maoists, liberals, and many former army officers and junta members who themselves took part in murderous repression against the Salvadoran people.

As for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, despite the fact that they are totally the contrary of Reagan and Jeanne (the Death Squad Queen) Kirkpatrick's image of anti-property "communist tyrants"—most property in Nicaragua is still held in private hands, and the Sandinistas have consistently worked to keep workers and peasants from seizing lands and workshops to be run collectively—they are statist bureaucrats who appear to be quite willing to sell out the opposition in El Salvador to maintain a fragile (but short-lived) detente with U.S. imperialism. Their mistreatment of the Miskito Indians, as well, shows that they leave much to be desired as far as the possibility for humane, libertarian revolution is concerned. Once firmly entrenched, there is little doubt that they would begin a new round of exploitation and bureaucratic statism.

Nevertheless, a sense of proportion is required. In the case of the Miskitos, for example, U.S. counterinsurgency in the border region where the Miskitos live, has turned a grave conflict into a perhaps irreconcilable bloodbath. Ultimately, a great deal of the political gangsterism and betrayals of the leftist opposition in Central America can be blamed on the conditions resulting from the counterrevolutionary genocide and the long history of crimes perpetrated by the U.S. in the region.

## **A Social Revolution in Central America**

The fact that there is so much support for the Sandinistas, and the fact of the vicious U.S. provocations against that small country, are evidence enough that notwithstanding all the limitations and distortions that such a brutalized terrain creates, a social revolution is occurring in Central America. The guerrilla leaders and the Sandinista comandantes are now riding the crest of that revolutionary wave, but it won't necessarily be limited by them, and cannot be, if it is to lead to genuine liberation.

There should be no illusions about the character of a leftist state which comes to power with the defeat of the fascist generals. But for the workers and peasants to give up their fight against the death squad regime at this point would be an even worse prospect.

Either the opposition in El Salvador will be slaughtered or it will defeat the U.S. puppet government. If it is defeated, the present rulers will consolidate their power and the possibility for rebellion will be eclipsed for years to come. If they win, that will only provide at best a breathing space, since the cycle will begin anew with U.S.-backed contras invading from Guatemala and Honduras and a probable U.S. military invasion.

As John Womack has observed, the national boundaries in Central America are meaningless. "A war in any of these countries implies a war in the others, as a war in New Jersey would imply a war in New York...The war is really a Central American war, and it will end in Guatemala."

But the U.S. isn't going to stand by and "lose" this volcanic chain of jewels. It will fight on until it is defeated. The report of war criminal Kissinger's phony commission, a rubber-stamp for existing Reagan policies, demonstrates, with its recommendations for eight billion dollars in "aid" to the region, its open threats against Nicaragua, and its downplaying of even paying lip service to human rights, that the U.S. sees Central America as integral to its empire. This is why the rebel groups there will never succeed in cutting any kind of deal with the U.S. This is a war to the death. There can be no middle ground, no purely political solutions, no permanent negotiated settlement.

## Shoot Down All Their Helicopters

The poor Indian and mestizo peasants of Central America will only achieve some peace and a possibility of freedom—a freedom with no guarantees—when they have defeated the United States and its puppets militarily, when they have shot all their helicopters down. Maybe they'll even get lucky and knock down one with the sinister Henry K. aboard.

An observer from the Americas Watch committee who had interviewed Guatemalan refugees just inside the border in Mexico reported to the *New York Times* that the Indian peasants had been forced to flee the army. "It is a level of butchery that seems unimaginable but is true," he said. "When survivors from these villages try to live in the hills, the army destroys their crops...Helicopters are used to patrol the tillable areas and fire upon people who try to grow things...And in our conversations with even the poorest Indians, they knew the United States supplied the helicopters and supported this government."

Those helicopters were made in the United States, paid for by taxes and assented to by the passive participation of us in the daily reproduction of capital and the structures of authority. North Americans could put an end to the Central American war by refusal to participate in it, by resistance to militarism, by disrupting the smoothly running machinery of genocide here at home. We are affected by and implicated in this war; its roots are to be found here in the heartland of the empire. Therefore, in the final analysis it will not end in Guatemala as Womack has argued, but in North America itself.

Those wretched victims of the helicopter gunships recognize their enemies. We owe it to them and to ourselves to do no less, and to act accordingly.

# fifth Estate

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)  
U.S. Out of the Americas!  
Shoot down all their helicopters!  
1984

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/315-winter-1984/u-s-out-of-the-americas>  
Fifth Estate #315, Winter, 1984

**[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)**