

Central America: what are the alternatives to the Kissinger Commission strategy?

by Carlos Wesley

In an exclusive interview with *EIR*, one of the key players in the Central American conflict, Nicaraguan opposition figure Alfonso Robelo, has lent confirmation to *EIR*'s contention that the regional strife is fomented at the top by members of the nominally Catholic Jesuit order and other religious cults. "It would seem that, at least in Nicaragua, a section of the Jesuits wants to be the power behind the throne, regardless of which current is governing. Once upon a time, the Jesuits were the power behind the throne of the bourgeoisie. Now they are . . . behind the Sandinista government," noted Robelo.

Robelo, who shares the leadership of the Costa Rica-based anti-Sandinista rebels with Eden ("Commander Zero") Pastora, noted: "Both Commander Pastora and myself were trained by the Jesuits." The Jesuits are very capable "in a perverse sort of way," said Robelo. "They have infiltrated the Church. I have frequently wondered if this was not a project conceived many years ago."

Robelo is wrong about one thing: The Jesuits do not intend to rule Central America, but to destroy it. The current conflict could become a widespread war of depopulation like 17th-century Europe's Thirty Years War, extending throughout the Central American region and to Mexico as well.

The potential for such a holocaust would be greatly magnified if President Ronald Reagan heeds those voices in his administration, such as Kissinger allies National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane and Undersecretary of Defense Fred Iklé, that are pushing him, in the flush of the Grenada victory, toward the trap of a "military solution" which would pour more oil on the Jesuit fire.

Condeca revived

That danger has increased with the big push to revive the Central American Defense Council (Condeca) after 14 years of inactivity. Condeca is the "mini-NATO" of the Central American countries most beholden to United Brands company, the so-called "banana republics"; it was set up on the initiative of former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, and its reactivation has been sought since Henry Kissinger

took over the administration's policy for the region this summer. Kissinger's military aide on the Central American Commission, Gen. (ret.) Gordon Sumner, explained to a reporter on Nov. 8 that "Kissinger is working on two tracks: the public side of the Commission, and his own private agenda." Sumner praised the revival of Condeca, and gleefully noted that "Nicaragua is beginning to come to a boiling point."

The chiefs of the armies in the Condeca alliance—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and Panama, which claims observer status—met on Oct. 22-23 and adopted several recommendations, including a study of the legality of allowing the "security and armed forces of Panama and other Central American countries to participate in the action for the pacification of Nicaragua." The meeting, which was hosted by Honduran strongman Gen. Gustavo Álvarez, a follower of Rev. Sun Yung Moon's cult, also recommended that the United States provide logistical support for an invasion, and, "in case of extreme crisis, direct participation of the U.S. with all its resources." At a previous meeting in Guatemala City with the head of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen. Paul Gorman, the use of Condeca troops for action in El Salvador, where government forces are faring badly against leftist guerrillas, was also mooted.

Fred Iklé, after touring the region with the Pentagon's Nestor Sanchez and others, told the press on Nov. 12 that the United States should provide more military assistance. Iklé also said that 1,000 American "combat engineers" would be sent to Costa Rica, whereupon White House spokesman Larry Speakes quickly "clarified" that the deployment was only "a proposal, a suggestion."

McFarlane said outright that Washington "would support" an invasion of Nicaragua by Condeca.

A deal in the making

In the face of these threats, sobered by the invasion of Grenada, and aware that with the landing of 1,800 U.S. Marines for maneuvers in nearby Honduras on Nov. 15, the United States now has over 6,000 troops on the ground in the area, the Nicaraguan regime is warning that it is about to be

invaded.

Sandinista Junta coordinator Daniel Ortega made hurried trips to meet with the President of Mexico on Nov. 10, and with the presidents of Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama in the days that followed. These are the four member countries of the Contadora Group, which has been attempting to work out a peaceful settlement to the Central American conflict, although Panama's current commitment to Contadora is in question. (Panama's Vice-President, Jorge Illueca, who is a founder of the Contadora Group and is currently president of the United Nations' General Assembly, was relieved of his vice-presidential duties on Nov. 15 for expressing his opposition to the Condeca military alliance.)

After these meetings, Ortega said that he expected Contadora to quickly achieve a peace agreement for the region, whose foreign ministers met in Washington on Nov. 16 to work on solving the crisis. A similar view was expressed by Reagan's special envoy for Central America, Richard Stone, after meeting with Mexico's President de la Madrid on Nov. 10. Stone—who also held meetings with the other presidents of the Contadora Group and with Ortega—praised the group's work and said that he expected a peaceful solution within the “next three weeks.”

What is under negotiation is what type of government Nicaragua will have. The United States has made it clear that it will not accept “another Cuba”—a Marxist regime in Nicaragua—and that it wants a more pluralistic government. There are other indications that at least some in the Nicaraguan leadership have accepted this fact, and that a deal with the United States is in the making.

For one thing, the Sandinista government moved to repair its relations with the Catholic Church, which had been badly damaged after government-tolerated “divine hordes” assaulted churchgoers and desecrated several churches at the beginning of November. Ortega met with the country's bishops and promised that the government would be more tolerant toward worshipers. Steps were also taken to improve relations with the independent newspaper *La Prensa*, and with the private sector.

At the same time, former Sandinistas Alfonso Robelo and Eden Pastora—who head a faction opposed to both the Sandinista government and to the former Somoza guardsmen fighting the Managua government from Honduras—were brought to the United States this month by circles associated to Jeane Kirkpatrick, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, for meetings with administration officials including Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Langhorne Motley, suggesting that a pluralistic, government of national unity is being put together.

Within Nicaragua, however, there are still those who want bloodshed. The Jesuit priest Ernesto Cardenal, a key member of the Sandinista regime, reacted to the overtures made to the private sector, to *La Prensa*, and to the bishops, by saying that there would be “no deal.”

Interview: ARDE leader Robelo

‘Jesuits are the power behind the throne’

Nicaraguan anti-Sandinista leader Alfonso Robelo is co-commander of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance (ARDE), which is waging guerrilla warfare from Costa Rica. He was interviewed in New York on Nov. 9 by EIR's Ibero-America editor Dennis Small and Caribbean desk officer Carlos Wesley.

EIR: What are the implications for Nicaragua of the U.S. invasion of Grenada? Do you foresee, or would you be in favor of, direct U.S. intervention in that area?

Robelo: No. Quite honestly, I would not be in favor of U.S. intervention in the area. First, because it is not necessary, because, contrary to the situation in Grenada, a majority of the population is already in arms or wants to take up arms against the totalitarian Managua regime. Therefore, any foreign interference would be mistaken. What does make sense is aid for those Nicaraguans who are willing to give their lives and who want to be the authors of the liberation of Nicaragua. That for the first time would provide an example of a totalitarian Marxist-Leninist government, which came to power by arms, being thrown out of power by popular will, by a popular revolt and popular effort. . . .

EIR: What is Washington up to in regard to Nicaragua?

Robelo: I have talked a lot with people from the administration and Congress, and . . . for months they have been telling me that congressional opposition to U.S. aid is impeding everything, despite the best efforts of the administration. Is this an excuse or is it the truth? Honestly, I am not the best person to answer. But the truth is that we have said we are willing to accept U.S. aid, so long as it does not take away our independence. We are not for sale. We are not willing to accept loans, only what you call “grants.”

EIR: What do you think of the current activities of the Kissinger Commission?

Robelo: I had the opportunity to speak with the majority of the members of the commission during their recent visit to Costa Rica. I found that they are in the learning stage; they are trying to dig into the Central American reality to be able to deliver conclusions later on. I think they hold an enormous

responsibility. But it is hard for me to predict now, since the only thing I got during the interview we had for more than an hour was a deluge of questions from them and a deluge of answers from me. But not an opinion out of any of them. They limited themselves to listening and absorbing.

EIR: The Contadora Group [Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, and Panama] is going to meet in Washington next week. Does that make you see any chances for solving the Central American problem?

Robelo: I see positive and negative things in Contadora. I am happy that Latin Americans are the ones interested in the area's situation. I think we Latin Americans should try to find our own solutions. We understand ourselves better; we can come up with things that are more easily accepted than things imposed from the outside by people who don't understand us as well.

Contadora's problem is that it has been skating around a lot, delaying and delaying without coming to anything. Only recently have I sensed they are beginning to concretize some things. I found their big error—their most serious error at the start—was that they worried too much about international peace: avoiding war between Honduras and Nicaragua, improving Nicaragua's relations with the United States and with Costa Rica, an end to concern with the internal situations of the countries. This error has recently been corrected.

There are two conceptions inside the Contadora Group itself. The Mexican conception holds that we should bring peace to Central America independently of what happens inside the countries. The other three—Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama—say we should bring peace to Central America or the Caribbean based on internal democratization in the countries. Mexico, because of its explosive social situation, explosive economic situation, political situation of a one-party dictatorship, with great corruption, is only trying to buy an insurance policy to be able to preserve that internal situation by having a foreign policy which does not look at the internal realities of countries, but favors those who sow violence in the region.

EIR: There is a third group which wants to solve the Central American problem by military means, Condeca [Central American Defense Council composed of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Panama]. How do you see the resurgence of this previously moribund group?

Robelo: Well, Condeca is troubling, because once again it means foreign interference in national affairs. Although they are Central Americans, it is an organization to be worried about. . . . Let's not get things tangled up. In the Nicaraguan case, the Nicaraguan will is expressed through the citizens of the country and

EIR: Our magazine has commented on the Jesuit influence in Nicaragua and on the presence of "rightist" religious sects

like the Moonies in Guatemala and Honduras. How much importance do you give to this factor? Could Central America degenerate into religious warfare?

Robelo: Certainly, that danger exists; and it is a real danger. The Central American peoples have tended to fanaticism dating back to their Indian traditions. . . . And the churches have manipulated this fanaticism, in a way. If you look at the introduction of communism in Nicaragua, you can see they are fanaticizing the people, manipulating them, pitting them against each other. And this is really dangerous because the civil war could come to be more barbarous than the one in Spain in the 1930s. This could be reproduced on a Central American scale. That would be really terrible for a region which has already had its blood drained by tyrannies, by corruption, and by exploitation.

EIR: And what about the Jesuits? You were once part of the Nicaraguan government [after the overthrow of Somoza] and afterward you criticized it for turning from its original aims. To what degree have Jesuits such as Fernando Cardenal and Xavier Gorostiaga been responsible for this?

Robelo: Before answering I want to tell you that both Commander Pastora and I were educated in Jesuit schools by the Jesuits of those days. It seems like a segment of the Jesuits—at least in Nicaragua—really wants to be the power behind the throne, independently of which way the current goes. They were once the power behind the throne of the bourgeoisie; now they are at least the top advisers of the Sandinista government and the big promoters of what has been called in Nicaragua "the Popular Church." They do this very cleverly, but with a perverse cleverness. They are genuine infiltrators in the Church. Many times I have thought over whether this was not some preconceived plan going back many years for priests who really have nothing to do with the priesthood. They are people who are enacting a totally preconceived infiltration. This is quite worrisome because there are already signs that their penetration will throw us back into the religious fanaticism which exists in our countries and where the posture of a respected priest, of a priest who has the image of a special man is utilized precisely to indoctrinate and to promote an ideological current.

EIR: The press is giving a lot of coverage to the fight between the Sandinista government and the Catholic Church led by Monsignor Obando. What do you have to say?

Robelo: First, I have tremendous respect for Monsignor Obando. He is a native, an intelligent, very prestigious and impeccably moral man. He fought against Somoza independently, without compromising himself with the opposition. Today he is fighting the totalitarian Managua government without compromising himself with the opposition. Beyond a doubt, he has the highest moral stature of anyone in the country. That is precisely why he is not tolerated by the totalitarian government in Managua.

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