

4 El Salvador's Civil War and Civic Foreign Policy

In the 1980s, civic foreign policy toward El Salvador materialized in more public forums and strata of society than in the previous decade. It manifested itself in insistent lobbying campaigns of Catholic, Protestant, and a few Jewish denominations. Religious human rights groups aimed at policymakers in Congress and in the Carter and Reagan administrations. As a response to the murder of El Salvador's popular archbishop and outspoken defender of citizens' rights, Oscar Romero, and to the killings of four U.S. churchwomen in 1980, religious activists established additional advocacy groups throughout the United States which concerned themselves with events in El Salvador and Central America. While targeting Congress, the administration, church constituencies, and U.S. public opinion, civic foreign policy strategies that tried to affect U.S. foreign policy matured during the 1980s.

Civic foreign policy toward El Salvador also broadened numerically. While the bulk of interested citizens in the 1970s stemmed from religious orders and staff exposed to events abroad, many of the newcomers in the 1980s did not belong to the church establishment or orders and groups active in Washington and overseas. Civic foreign policy developed and became quite articulate and dedicated on the grassroots level of U.S. society. Throughout the United States, new citizens' groups focusing on policy questions regarding Central America emerged. While heterogeneous in character and purpose, most of these groups and citizens were generated from the religious sector. Apart from new grassroots groups and active citizens, an increasing and large number of religious denominations and NGOs made their voices heard on Central America. Between December 1980 and November 1981 alone, mainline Protestant churches, Catholic, Quaker, Brethren, Moravian, and Jewish groups, as well as various religious leaders issued over 50 statements concerning U.S. policy toward El Salvador or the plight of Salvadoran civil war refugees.¹ One of the "most remarkable feature[s]" of civic foreign policy of the 1980s was "the participation of previously inactive religious organizations."²

Recent studies have labeled the emergence of a broad and active conglomerate of religious and secular groups, individuals, and grassroots organizations in the United States interested in Central American peace, foreign policy, and refugee issues during the

¹ *Peacemaking: U.S. Religious Statements on El Salvador* (New York: IRTF, December 1981).

² Schoultz, *National Security*, 4.

1980s, the "Central America movement."³ From 1978 to the late 1980s, the "movement" focused especially on issues relating to El Salvador and Nicaragua, occasionally on Guatemala. While some groups shifted their focus between countries of concern, others concentrated on very specific issues relating to only one nation. The following pages concentrate on the further development of this heterogeneous "movement" and the foreign policy objectives of the religious-based groups.⁴

Three issues dominated civic foreign policy toward El Salvador in the 1980s: the civil war, U.S. foreign policy, and refugee issues relating to the civil war. Chapter four examines the general civil war situation, the policy of the U.S. government, and the response of the religious community. Against the background of the developments in El Salvador and of the changes in U.S. foreign policy under the Carter (1980) and Reagan administrations (1981-1988), the chapter examines the structures, strategies, and concepts of civic foreign policy toward El Salvador that evolved in the 1980s. Chapter five focuses on civic foreign policy as it relates to questions of Salvadoran migration to the United States.

It is not the intention of this study to deliver an extended and detailed account of the official foreign and refugee policy.⁵ The policies of the late Carter and Reagan administrations, however, are critical in the context of civic foreign policy. In the previous chapter, it was shown to what extent religious groups' involvement in the foreign policy discourse concerning Latin America emerged due to personal contact with the region. In the 1970s, this involvement grew with deteriorating social and human rights conditions, the vanishing of democratic means in Latin America, and an opening of the foreign policy process in the United States. In the 1980s, contact between religious groups and activists in the United States and Central America deepened. Civic foreign

³ Religious activist and scholar Phillip Berryman explains that the "Central America movement" was a sprawling series of initiatives with no more than ad hoc coordination." Sociologist Christian Smith specifies the movement as the "Central America Peace Movement," whereas former activist Van Gosse refers to the "Central America solidarity movement." Differences in terminology often depend on the studies' focus. See Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 221; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*; Van Gosse, "The North American Front: Central American Solidarity in the Reagan Era," in Mike Davis and Michael Sprinter (eds.), *Reshaping the US Left: Popular Struggles in the 1980s* (London/NY: Verso, 1988), 14.

⁴ The reader of this chapter will not find an analysis of the "movement" and its developments from a sociological or political science perspective interested in social movement theory. Smith's *Resisting Reagan* or Gosse's "The North American Front" provide comprehensive accounts in this matter.

⁵ Various authors have done so and presented various motivations of U.S. foreign policy toward El Salvador or Central America: LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*; Schoultz, *National Security*; Pastor, *Whirlpool*; Martin Diskin and Kenneth Sharpe, *The Impact of U.S. Policy in El Salvador, 1979-1985* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Institute of International Studies, 1985); McClintock, *The American Connection*.

policy, however, responded particularly to the strategies and (in the eyes of the activists) consequences of U.S. foreign policy.

4.1 The Early Years of the Salvadoran Civil War

In 1980 and 1981, El Salvador entered the first brutal years of a civil war that lasted until January 1992.⁶ Although indigenous in origin (see chapter 3.2), El Salvador's civil war generated a high degree of international visibility and involvement. While the civil war's main combating parties - the Salvadoran security forces, right-wing paramilitary groups, and a leftist guerrilla movement (the FMLN) - were violently struggling over power,⁷ the government, social democratic, and civic forces were caught in a political stalemate. With the government unable to curb and control violence and human rights violations committed by its armed forces - often linked to the right-wing death squads -, the social democratic⁸ and social Christian⁹ parties aligned themselves with guerrilla forces in 1980 to become the FDR-FMLN. The war soon internationalized on various political levels and through different means. Foreign governments, international NGOs, foreign citizens, and international governmental organizations (IGOs) became significant players in the Salvadoran conflict. By 1980, the individual conflict of El Salvador had grown into a notable geopolitical crisis potential.

El Salvador was only one of the three conflicts that marked Central America's history of the 1980s. In Nicaragua, the leftist Sandinista movement had consolidated its power since July 1979 when it had overthrown the repressive dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza in a popular rebellion. In 1980, the United States began to finance counter-

⁶ After a series of peace talks under UN supervision, the Salvadoran government and the FMLN opposition signed a peace accord on 16 January 1992 in Mexico City. The peace treaty ended the military conflict, settled the transformation of the FMLN from an insurgent force into a political opposition party, and announced political, military, and economic reforms. The literature on El Salvador's civil war is extensive. Most studies and analyses have been written in the wake of the war and the heat of the debate itself. Because of the first Reagan administration's foreign policy preoccupation with El Salvador, many U.S. studies concentrate on the motivation and implication of U.S. policies. There are fewer books on the Salvadoran history of the civil war. Detailed histories of the war, its causes, and effects can be found in Dunkerly, *Power*, chapter 8; Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace* (Boulder, CO: Westview, ²1995); Byrne's, *El Salvador's Civil War* is more focused in its analysis. As it attempts to explain strategies and processes of revolutions, it gives a well-documented analysis of the military strategies of the FMLN, the armed forces, and the United States.

⁷ The security forces wanted to maintain power while the opposition sought revolution to undertake the construction of a new society through "the decisive military and insurrectional battles for the seizure of power by the People." See FMLN, Call for a General Offensive, January 1981, in: Leiken and Rubin, *Central American Crisis Reader*, 420-421.

⁸ *Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario* (MNR)

⁹ *Movimiento Popular Social Cristiano* (MPSC). The MPSC was a dissident group of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC).

revolutionary forces (the contras) to oust the Sandinista government. The contra war in Nicaragua lasted until 1990 when the Sandinistas were defeated in national democratic elections. Between 1980 and 1983, repressive military governments committed their worst human rights violations with the comparatively highest casualty rate in Guatemala's long civil war (1971-1996). In this counterinsurgency war of the early 1980s against leftist guerrilla forces, the Guatemalan security forces and paramilitary death squads killed well over 100,000 civilians, and destroyed over 400 villages, resulting in over one million displaced persons (DPs) and refugees.¹⁰ All Central American countries, including Costa Rica and Honduras, had to deal with large numbers of displaced persons and civil war refugees. As a consequence of the civil wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua and U.S. foreign policy objectives, Honduras became the base for the military training of Salvadoran troops and Nicaragua's contras.¹¹ In sum, the consequences of the three civil wars - militarization, economic dependency on foreign sources, thousands of civilian deaths, and millions of DPs and refugees - were felt in the whole region.

Between 1980 and 1982, the violent conflict escalated in El Salvador. In October 1979, the reform wing of the security forces ousted President General Carlos Humberto Romero. A reform junta set up of two military officers and three politically moderate civilians attempted to implement popularly desired social and economic reforms.¹² The Romero government's repressive response to popular demands for political and socio-economic reforms had culminated in the dissolution of public order in September 1979 when 100 people were killed during the first three weeks of that month. Fears within the military forces that developments in El Salvador could lead to a revolution similar to the popular uprising in Nicaragua in July of the same year, drove them into cooperation with moderate and reformist political parties, members of the Catholic Church, and progressive businessmen and army officers.¹³ The coup's underlying purpose was to forestall a leftist revolution by breaking the power of the agro-oligarchy and integrate

¹⁰ See Susan Burgerman, "Mobilizing Principles: The Role of Transnational Activists in Promoting Human Rights Principles," *Human Rights Quarterly* 20:4 (1998): 905-923, 905.

¹¹ Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 125.

¹² The members of this junta were Colonel Adolfo Majano, Colonel Jaime Abdul Gutiérrez, the Social Democrat Guillermo Ungo, the rector of the Jesuit-run Universidad Centroamericana Román Mayorga, and the businessman Mario Andino. The government consisted of members and supporters of moderate and reformist parties, the Catholic Church, progressive army officers and members of the business community. This first junta government lasted until 1 January 1980, when Ungo and Mayorga, and a little later, Andino, resigned.

¹³ Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 53.

democratic civilian forces into the government. It was, as one scholar observes, "the last opportunity to effect a democratic transition in the country short of civil war."¹⁴

Although the reform junta denounced the human rights violations of the Romero government, banned the paramilitary organization ORDEN,¹⁵ and announced agrarian reforms, real power remained in the hands of the hard-liners in the military, who tried to stop reforms.¹⁶ Only two weeks after the inauguration of the new junta, demonstrations were repressed and hundreds of people killed. The popular movements and guerrilla forces answered with the occupation of factories and ministries. The civilian-military junta was unable to dismantle the interweaving of paramilitary death squads and the security forces.¹⁷ Protesting against continued repression and the military's exceeding power, the civilian members of the junta resigned.¹⁸ Two of them, Guillermo Ungo and Román Mayorga, later joined the oppositional *Frente Democrático Revolucionario* (FDR). Ungo became the president of FDR. Until the elections for the Constituent Assembly in March 1982, several new Christian Democratic members joined and resigned from the government.¹⁹ The "second" reform junta²⁰ announced the implementation of a far-reaching land reform in March 1980, which triggered a new wave of violence by right-wing death squads against the rural population, financed by the agro-oligarchy.²¹ Through the new law, the landowning elite was faced with the

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ ORDEN had been formally dissolved but was reincarnated soon thereafter under a new name.

¹⁶ Dunkerly, *Power*, 387f.

¹⁷ The report of the UN Truth Commission on El Salvador and human rights reports by several NGOs trace the human rights record of the security forces, paramilitary organizations, and the guerrillas. See the reports of Socorro Jurídico, the Salvadoran Catholic archdiocese's legal office, for the army's human rights violations before 1982 and accounts by Tutela Legal for the period after 1982. For the sake of greater justice, Archbishop Rivera y Damas replaced Socorro Jurídico with the organization Tutela Legal in 1982 that reported and denounced human rights violations by the army as well as the guerrillas. Socorro Jurídico and Tutela Legal were major sources of information for human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Americas Watch. See Americas Watch et al., *Report on Human Rights in El Salvador: Compiled by Americas Watch and the American Civil Liberties Union* (New York: Vintage, 1982) and Americas Watch, *El Salvador's Decade of Terror: Human Rights Since the Assassination of Archbishop Romero* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

¹⁸ Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 59.

¹⁹ Christian Democrats who had joined the junta government in early 1980 resigned and formed a dissident Christian Democrat movement.

²⁰ The PDC (*Partido Demócrata Cristiana*) joined the junta in January 1980 after the initial civilian members had resigned. Soon thereafter, the PDC's left wing split from the junta and the party formed its own movement. Despite the announcement and partial implementation of the land reform, the participation of the PDC did not stop the military from pursuing large-scale human rights violations.

²¹ Eventually, large landowners and the extreme right formed their own political party in 1981, the *Alianza Republicana Nacionalista* (ARENA).

expropriation of their estates.²² The terror was also directed against moderate forces that coordinated the agrarian reform.²³

Despite the ascendance of democratically elected legislative assemblies and a civilian President in 1982, 1984, and 1985, the civilian forces never fully controlled the military.²⁴ Christian Democrat Napoleon Duarte, who became the junta's president after the junta's reform officer Majano was removed from office in December 1980, emerged as El Salvador's political leader until his death in 1988. After an interim of two years - between the newly elected Constituent Assembly in March 1982²⁵ and the presidential elections of March 1984 -, Duarte would again become President, this time as the official democratically elected candidate. While the death squad terror declined under his reign from the mid to the late 1980s, and he moved toward negotiations with the leftist opposition, his power over public policies was extremely limited by the dominant power of the armed forces and pressure from the United States.²⁶

As a result of the war's early repression and the murder of Archbishop Romero in March 1980, moderate and left-wing political forces were driven out of power and forced into exile, two opposition newspapers were terrorized into extinction, and the Catholic Church's critical position against state repression and for citizens' rights was severely limited.²⁷ Most Jesuits and other progressive forces in the Catholic Church had looked for collaboration with the reform members of the 1979 Junta. Some of the more radical

²² The new law provided for the expropriation of land estates of more than 500 hectares (approximately 15 percent of El Salvador's farm land). A second phase would have affected estates between 150 and 500 hectares (approximately 60 percent of the total land), and a third phase gave freehold rights to tenants of small plots. Landowners would have been paid a small compensation. Of the announced plan, only part one was partially implemented but largely failed due to cooperation between the military and landowners and attacks on members of newly established cooperatives.

²³ Dunkerly, *Power*, 391.

²⁴ See Dunkerly, *Power*, 405. All parties to the left of the PDC did not participate in the elections out of fear that candidates or supporters could become targets of violence.

²⁵ ARENA, a party linked to the agro-economic elite and right-wing death squad activities, had won the elections in 1982. Fearing its support for a "centrist" government threatened, the United States pressured for the nomination of a candidate as provisional President other than ARENA's leader Roberto d'Aubuisson, who had tried to stage a coup against the reform government in February 1980. The banker Alvaro Magaña thus became provisional President until the presidential elections of March 1984.

²⁶ Regarding the Duarte government and its relationship to the military and the United States, see: Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 137ff.; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, chapter 6 and 7; Martin Diskin and Kenneth Sharpe, "El Salvador," in Morris Blachman et al. (eds.), *Confronting Revolution: Security Through Diplomacy in Central America* (New York: Random, 1986), 70-87.

²⁷ Approximately half of the remaining priests, nuns, and other religious workers took sides with Romero's successor Archbishop Rivera y Damas, who followed a moderate position, pressing for reconciliation and negotiation. One quarter of the priests remained conservative and another quarter held on to progressive positions. Eight to ten members of the latter group remained as priests in the guerrilla-controlled region; others were in exile. See Montgomery, "Liberation and Revolution," 90.

members at UCA had contacts with the new FMLN.²⁸ In general, however, the Jesuits pressed for mediation and negotiation after 1981.²⁹ Leading Jesuits were living in exile during the early 1980s.

Against the background of failed reform and continued state repression, the political left reacted with the unification of various reformist and left-wing parties, popular groups and unions in 1980. All members of the political parties represented in the first junta government eventually joined forces with the left.³⁰ Violent means were thought to be the only alternative left for the opposition to achieve its goal. While the FDR would internationally become recognized as a "political force" and democratic *Ersatz*, the combatants determined the life of the opposition during most of the 1980s with the political wing in exile.³¹ Nonetheless, both sides, the Salvadoran security forces and paramilitary death squads on one side and the guerrillas on the other, found themselves in a military deadlock. The military could not defeat the FMLN – even with the guerrillas' limited arms supply in the very early years of the civil war and the military's inflated budget - and the FMLN was never close to seizing state power.³²

The main victims of the civil war were non-combatant, ordinary citizens. With the security forces' and paramilitary death squads' determined war against guerrilla action and progressive opposition forces, and the guerrillas' fight against state repression and existing economic power structures, human rights conditions deteriorated. While aiming at guerrillas and other elements of "insurgency," ordinary citizens became one of the main targets in the struggle of the security forces and right-wing paramilitary groups to forestall the victory of "communist forces." With a death toll of 75,000 during the whole civil war period, paramilitary death squads and the military killed approximately 35,000

²⁸ Whitfield, *Paying the Price*, 141. In exile, the editor of UCA's journal *Estudios Centroamericanos* and later director of UCA, Father Ignacio Ellacuría, e.g. met with members of the FDR-FMLN.

²⁹ Ellacuría and five other Jesuits, as well as their cook and her daughter, were killed by troops of the Salvadoran armed forces on 16 November 1989. For a history of the Jesuit's role in El Salvador's civil conflict, see Whitfield, *Paying the Price*.

³⁰ Dunkerly, *Power*, 381.

³¹ In June 1980, the Socialist International recognized the FDR. In August 1981, Mexico and France recognized the united political and guerrilla opposition FMLN-FDR as a "representative political force." In the eyes of many national and international observers, the FDR in unity with the FMLN had evolved as a democratic alternative to the traditional political parties due to the latter's inability to bring about reform. See Heinrich-W. Krumwiede, "Militärherrschaft und (Re-)Demokratisierung in Zentralamerika," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 9 (1986): 17-29.

³² Dunkerly, *Power*, 400f. Between 1979 and 1981 the military readiness of the guerrilla forces to engage in large-scale conflict was extremely limited. Arms began to flow from the Soviet bloc through Cuba and Nicaragua after 1981. The quantities never reached the high numbers that the U.S. government imagined in its counterinsurgency strategy. For further information, see Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*.

civilians in the years between 1980 and 1982 alone.³³ The massacre of 600 civilians at the Sumpul River at the Salvadoran-Honduran border in May 1980 and the slaughter of over 750 peasants and their families in and around El Mozote (province of Morazán) are the most infamous cases of the army's strategy in the early years of the war.³⁴

In the war that lasted until 1992, approximately 75,000 people were killed. Out of more than 22,000 incidents of grave violence (60 percent cases of killings, 25 percent forced disappearances, 20 percent torture), nearly 60 percent are blamed on members of the military. About 25 percent more are attributed to members of the security forces, and ten percent on members of right-wing "death squads." The remaining five percent are blamed on the guerrilla rebels in the FMLN. The great majority of the deaths were peasants (approximately 68 percent) and workers (approximately 15 percent).³⁵

Although the number of murders and human rights violations linked to the guerrilla forces of the FMLN was much smaller, a high proportion of those who were directly or indirectly killed were civilians as well. During the 1980s, the guerrillas committed human rights violation through economic sabotage and the use of land mines.³⁶ The demolition of electrical towers and posts, bridges, buses, and other elements of the infrastructure touched the lives of many citizens, including the poor whom the FMLN claimed to present.³⁷

El Salvador, like Guatemala and Nicaragua, emerged from the war heavily dependent on international assistance for the externally-driven effort to modernize, liberalize, and democratize the region in order to prevent an alternative path to modernization sought by citizens and progressive as well as revolutionary groups. The country's infrastructure and economy were severely damaged by the war.³⁸ With the peace accords, the leadership of the FMLN agreed to accept the liberal democratic model and capitalist modernization in return for political participation and limited social and

³³ See Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 57f. See also LaFeber, *Revolutions*, 10.

³⁴ See chapter 4.4 for a discussion of the El Mozote massacre.

³⁵ See Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 57f. An additional 550,000 (probably more) of El Salvador's five million inhabitants were displaced and another 500,000 fled the country, most of them to the United States. Booth and Walker, *Understanding*, 197, table 11.

³⁶ Montgomery lists the FMLN's human rights violations: Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 206.

³⁷ Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 206. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the FMLN also kidnapped President Duarte's daughter and killed several U.S. marines, U.S. soldiers, and bystanders.

³⁸ Jenny Pearce, "From Civil War to Civil Society: Has the End of the Cold War brought Peace to Central America?" *International Affairs* 74: 3 (July 1998): 587-616.

economic reform. The civil wars did not change the socioeconomic power structure in El Salvador.³⁹ Yet, the society gained civic space, albeit fragile. Previously excluded social groups and NGOs that had started to organize in the 1970s and 1980s became a permanent feature of the political system.⁴⁰ The complex interplay between local social processes, such as citizen organization and migration, and international humanitarian assistance and "solidarity" work that had started in the 1970s, grew in the 1980s, and partially contributed to the growth of Central America's civil societies.

As mentioned in the introductory remarks to this chapter, foreign actors became increasingly involved in the Salvadoran conflict. A growing number of nongovernmental actors from abroad entered El Salvador's political environment directly and indirectly. The tasks and functions of foreign NGOs included aiding civil war victims and refugees, demonstrating solidarity with the opposition or the Catholic Church, collecting information about the war and human rights abuses, and pressuring their own governments' policy toward El Salvador. Before examining U.S. religious groups' active participation in the political process between El Salvador and the United States, this study will outline the engagement of the foreign actor who was most extensively engaged in the course of the civil war. The political, economic, and military developments of El Salvador in the 1980s were very much shaped by the U.S. government.

4.2 U.S. foreign policy toward El Salvador

In 1979, the political conflict in El Salvador gained worldwide attention when the confrontation between the state and popular movements worsened visibly and Japan, Switzerland, West Germany, Britain, and Costa Rica closed their embassies in July of that year.⁴¹ The conflict in El Salvador and the rebellion in Nicaragua continued to raise international attention throughout the following years because of the United States' explicit interest and growing involvement.⁴² In 1981, the new President Ronald Reagan declared that events in El Salvador were taking place in "our front yard" and that

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 191-195. For an analysis of social group activism in the 1990s, see John A. Booth and Patricia B. Richards, "Civil Society, Political Capital, and Democratization in Central America," *Journal of Politics* 60:3 (August 1998): 780-801.

⁴¹ Dunkerly, *Power*, 379.

⁴² Analyses of U.S. foreign policy toward El Salvador and Central America during the 1980s are abundant. Good starting points are: LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*; Schoultz, *National Security*; Knud

"terrorists" and "outside interference" were not only aiming at El Salvador but "at the whole of Central and possibly later South America and ...North America."⁴³ At the same press conference, President Reagan made also sure that, "I didn't start the El Salvador thing. I inherited it." Various scholars have observed that El Salvador's civil war would have taken a different course without the interest and involvement of the United States.⁴⁴

When President Reagan was inaugurated in January 1981, El Salvador was in turmoil. The U.S. backed Christian Democrat Napoleon Duarte had been leading the Salvadoran government only since December 1980. Only a few days before Duarte's installment, four U.S. missionaries had been raped and killed in El Salvador causing an outrage among the U.S. religious community and increasing U.S. media attention toward the conflict. At the time, the precise facts and faces behind the killings were disputed, but the first conclusions pointed toward members of the security forces. Only a few days before the murder of the religious workers, almost the entire leadership of the FDR had been killed, stirring outrage and anger among sympathizers. Then, at the beginning of January 1981, two U.S. labor advisers of the American Institute for Free Labor Development were killed.⁴⁵ A few days before Reagan's presidential inauguration in January 1981, the guerrilla movement in El Salvador launched its so-called "final offensive." President Carter, who had halted military aid after the murder of the U.S. missionaries, called immediately for the restoration of aid. The guerrilla uprising was halted by the military. Some 500 people died in the first days of the fighting.⁴⁶

Correspondingly, the political developments in other Central American countries alarmed U.S. foreign policymakers. In Guatemala, reports highlighted the growth of a guerrilla movement as well as state repression. In Nicaragua, the leftist "Sandinista leaders had solidified their control over the government and were attempting with varying degrees of success to manage the instability that inevitably accompanies a major

Krakau, "Policy as Myth and Myth as Policy: The Monroe Doctrine in Recent Central American Policies of the United States," *Revue Française D'Études Américaines* 61 (August 1994): 255-266.

⁴³ "The Situation in El Salvador," Press Conference by President Reagan, 6 March 1981, in: *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1981* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1984), 1284.

⁴⁴ There are various issues regarding U.S. involvement and influence, ranging from military to economic and to political questions. Overall, studies seem to agree that the United States has contributed significantly to preventing a leftist revolution in El Salvador under the Carter and Reagan administrations. There are nuances in this assessment, however. The British historian James Dunkerly writes, "it was US intervention that halted the advance of the Salvadoran revolution." Dunkerly, *Power*, 402. Political scientist Byrne regards the U.S. role as "an important factor, though not the decisive one, in preventing a successful revolutionary outcome in early 1980." Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War*, 67. Regarding the following years of the 1980s, U.S. scholar Martin Diskin notes that the United States succeeded in keeping the left out of power, strengthened the right, indirectly unified the left, and further marginalized reformers. Diskin, "El Salvador," 61.

⁴⁵ Michael Hammer and Mark Pearlman were the victims of rightist violence.

social revolution."⁴⁷ In the small Caribbean island of Grenada, a leftist government with an inclination toward anti-American rhetoric had taken over in 1979 and Cuba, the main adversary of the United States in Latin America, assisted the new government in building an airport.⁴⁸ Overall, the economic conditions of the whole region were devastating, making distressed citizens more sensitive to calls for economic change. Like the Carter administration, the incoming Republican administration of President Reagan was preoccupied with rising "instability"⁴⁹ and the prospect of more left-leaning governments in Central America. The perception of the situation, however, differed fundamentally between many of the administrations' policymakers. Hence, between 1979 and 1981, "dramatic changes occurred in United States policy toward Central America."⁵⁰

Republican intellectuals and policymakers had presented the first Reagan administration's foreign policy focus on Central America in a series of statements and policy programs in the election year of 1980.⁵¹ El Salvador was to occupy a prominent position in the Reagan administration's re-vitalization of the Cold War logic. Statements by President Reagan, the Department of State, and the Committee of Santa Fe - a conservative think tank⁵² - illustrate the interpretation of revolutionary events in Central America according to the bipolar view of the Cold War. One of the most famous foreign policy statements in President Reagan's first year in office, a White Paper of the State Department from February 1981, outlined the developments in El Salvador according to the antagonism between the East and the West:

The situation in El Salvador presents a strikingly familiar case of Soviet, Cuban, and other Communist military involvement in a politically troubled Third World country. By providing arms, training, and direction to a local insurgency and by supporting it with a global propaganda campaign, the Communists have intensified and widened the conflict...⁵³

⁴⁶ Dunkerly, *Power*, 400.

⁴⁷ Schoultz, *National Security*, 48.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ The term is used by Lars Schoultz, *National Security*, who assesses the role of Latin American "instability" in the perceptions of U.S. policymakers and, subsequently, the decision-making process of U.S. foreign policy.

⁵⁰ Schoultz, *National Security*, 66.

⁵¹ President Reagan's ambassador to the UN, Jeane Kirkpatrick, had published a widely discussed criticism of President Carter's Latin America policy. Looking at various Latin American societies, she distinguishes between so-called authoritarian, i.e. military-civilian dictatorships (e.g. El Salvador) and totalitarian, i.e. communist (Cuba, Nicaragua), regimes. While attacking the latter, she seeks out the former as possible U.S. allies despite democratic flaws: Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, "Dictatorships and Double Standards," *Commentary* 68:5 (1979): 34-45 and *ibid.*, "U.S. Security and Latin America," *Commentary* 71:1 (January 1981): 29-40. The Republican Party platform from 1980 as well as the so-called Santa Fe Program (1980), written by conservative intellectuals, also indicated the central role of Latin America in the new administration's foreign policy.

⁵² Members of the group found positions as ambassadors or consultants in the new administration.

⁵³ U.S. Department of State, Special Report No. 80, "Communist Interference in El Salvador," in Leiken, *Central American Crisis Reader*, 518 -522, 518. The arms flow from the Soviet Union, Cuba, and Nicaragua became a hotly debated issue in the United States. Apart from being of importance for U.S.

U.S. foreign policy studies observe a return of ideology in U.S. foreign policy during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The new emphasis on the Cold War ideology correlated with the renaissance of the mission theme that had already been re-introduced by President Carter. According to the historians Davis and Lynn-Jones, President Reagan combined Carter's mission emphasis on human rights with a simple and ideological rhetoric of power.⁵⁴ Central America became one, if not the geographical center of Reagan's ideological "anti-communist" foreign policy.⁵⁵ According to the new policymakers in Washington, developments in Nicaragua and El Salvador were casebook examples of communist expansionism. According to this interpretation of international events, the expansion of leftist - or, in the eyes of President Reagan, communist - social movements and systems had to be stopped. Jeane Kirkpatrick, one of the hardliners in the administration's foreign policy team,⁵⁶ framed the administration's interpretation of the Soviet-Cuban strategies in Central America in January 1981:

The first fruits of these efforts are the new governments of Grenada and Nicaragua...El Salvador, having arrived now at the edge of anarchy, is threatened by progressively well-armed guerrillas...Meanwhile, the terrorism relied on by contemporary Leninists (and Castroists) to create a 'revolutionary situation' has reappeared in Guatemala. Slower but no less serious transformations are under way in Guyana, where ties to Castro have become extensive, tight, and complex, and in Martinique and Guadeloupe, where Castroite groups threaten existing governments.⁵⁷

Latin Americanist Lars Schoultz concludes illustratively, "Reagan administration officials may have differed on Cuban's exact role in the region, but all agreed that Fidel Castro, smiling through his cigar smoke, was once again up to no good."⁵⁸

The new administration's policy toward El Salvador matched an idealistic rhetoric with realist means framed by an ideological concept. On the one hand, the administration emphasized U.S. values such as democracy, freedom, and human rights in its Latin American policy. Accordingly, it announced its intention to support those societal forces

security policy in the region, it became a key issue in the "war over information" between supporters and critics of U.S. foreign policy in the 1980s. The Soviet bloc's military assistance of the FMLN did not start in large quantities before early 1981. The claims of the Soviet-Cuban arms flow could not be proved for some years thereafter. See Dunkerly, *Power*, 403; Schoultz, *National Security*, 61-63.

⁵⁴ Tami R. Davis and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Citty Upon a Hill," *Foreign Policy* 66 (1987): 20-38, 27f.

⁵⁵ Robert A. Pastor, "The Centrality of Central America," in Larry Berman (ed.), *Looking Back on the Reagan Presidency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 33-49, 35.

⁵⁶ The administration was not a monolithic bloc. In general, the foreign and security policy experts of the Reagan administrations were grouped into hardliners and moderates. While the first group, among them the first Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, and Jeane Kirkpatrick, dominated the discourse during 1981, the moderates took over in 1983. Domestic criticism had grown during 1981 and 1982, putting pressure on the administration to change its policy, at least rhetorically.

⁵⁷ Kirkpatrick, "U.S. Security and Latin America," 29.

⁵⁸ Schoultz, *National Security*, 49.

that presented and protected these values.⁵⁹ This kind of idealistic rhetoric became a significant part of a strategy to secure domestic support for its foreign policy. On the other hand, the administration pursued a *realpolitik* by sending and increasing massive military and economic assistance to authoritarian regimes such as the Salvadoran government.

The administration employed three means to ensure its objectives in El Salvador during the early 1980s: a military, economic, and political strategy. A State Department document from June 1981 describes the three-part plan.⁶⁰ The United States sought to prevent a "communist takeover" by mobilizing military sources and supplying and training the Salvadoran army. Furthermore, the United States wanted to stabilize the Salvadoran government ("which shares our ideal of democracy") politically and economically.⁶¹ In order to prevent further economic deterioration, economic aid from the United States and from international governmental organizations like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank was supposed to stabilize the economic situation and stimulate economic growth.

While a more aggressive tone regarding the objectives in El Salvador dominated 1981, the administration switched to softer tones after witnessing widespread Congressional and public opposition against the prospect of a U.S. military intervention in El Salvador.⁶² Policymakers even confirmed that locally grown problems had partly caused the Salvadoran conflict.⁶³ The re-democratization of El Salvador became an essential part of the foreign policy concept, although the results were erratic. Accordingly, Washington supported the elections of 1982, 1984, and 1985, land reform, and funded a 1984 Salvadoran government project that aimed at reforming the judicial system.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ See e.g. speech by Secretary of the State, George Shultz, at the *Commonwealth Club*, San Francisco, California (22 February 1985), in: Leiken, *Central American Crisis Reader*, 583-590.

⁶⁰ "Annual Integrated Assessment of Security Assistance for El Salvador," U.S. Department of State, telegram from U.S. Embassy, San Salvador, to the Secretary of State, 12 June 1981, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 01805.

⁶¹ "Annual Integrated Assessment of Security Assistance for El Salvador," U.S. Department of State, telegram from U.S. Embassy, San Salvador, to the Secretary of State, 12 June 1981, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 01805.

⁶² An analysis of the opinions and positions of different sectors of society and Congress regarding the Central American conflicts (with reference to El Salvador) can be found in Lawrence Whitehead, "Explaining Washington's Central America Policies," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 15:2 (1983): 321-363 and in Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 360-381.

⁶³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Foreign Policy and the American Character," *Foreign Affairs* 62:1 (1983): 1-16, 9; Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 362.

⁶⁴ Regarding the judicial reform and its flaws, see Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 203f.

Throughout his two terms in office, President Reagan never really relinquished his commitment to a military solution in Central America, but by the latter years of his administration it became increasingly difficult to pursue. In late 1986, it was revealed that National Security Council staff members had helped sell U.S. arms to Iran in order to secure the release of U.S. hostages and had then channeled the profits to the counter-revolutionary army (the contras) in Nicaragua.⁶⁵ The subsequent Iran-Contra scandal seriously weakened the administration's policies towards Central America. In the meantime, President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica and other Central American presidents had seized an initiative that launched the Central American peace process. The international backing for the peace agreement Esquipulas II in 1987 isolated the United States, which did not support the agreement. In addition, the Soviet Union began to transform. With the Soviet Union's process of opening up, further appeals to Cold War ideology as a justification for intervention in the region seemed to belong to the past. Nevertheless, President Reagan did not abandon his hostile policy towards the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. When President George Bush came into office in 1989, U.S. policy in the region took a more pragmatic turn. The U.S. invasion of Panama in December 1989 demonstrated once more U.S. unilateral goals and means in the region, but the administration began to shift in favor of a political solution to the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran conflicts.⁶⁶

In the United States, the foreign policy discourse concentrated on the providing and effectiveness of military and economic aid. During the 1980s, El Salvador was the largest Central American recipient of U.S. aid and the third largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid overall. While El Salvador had received no military assistance in 1978 and 1979, \$6 million were granted during President Carter's last year in office. Between 1981 and 1984, the amount rose from \$35,5 million to \$82 million (1982) to \$206,5 million.⁶⁷ With the military help of the United States, the number of Salvadoran troops grew from 12,000 in 1980 to 42,000 in 1985. The U.S. military had trained half of the Salvadoran officer corps and U.S. security personnel in El Salvador doubled to approximately 100.⁶⁸ Economic aid was granted in even larger amounts, rising constantly from \$121 million in

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress, Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair, House Report No. 100-433, Senate Report No. 100--216, 100th Cong., 1st sess., 17 November 1987 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1988).

⁶⁶ See e.g. William Leogrande, "From Reagan to Bush: The Transition in US policy towards Central America," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 22:3 (1990): 595-622.

⁶⁷ See statistics in Herman Rosa, *AID y las transformaciones globales en El Salvador* (Managua, Nicaragua: CRIES, 1993), 114.

⁶⁸ See Diskin, "El Salvador," 78; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 35.

1981 to \$223 million in 1984 and \$425 million in 1985.⁶⁹ Much of the assistance did not go into economic reform projects, as announced, or to relief and refugee projects but helped to undo damage caused by the civil war and keep the Salvadoran economy afloat.⁷⁰ To put the numbers into historical perspective, it should be noted that the total amount of assistance between 1980 and 1982 alone exceeded the total amount of aid in the previous two decades (1963-1979) by \$34 million.⁷¹

President Reagan's policy toward El Salvador was situated in the tradition of the three main aspects of U.S. policy toward Latin America since the late 19th century: economic, geopolitical, and moral-ideological interests.⁷² The history of U.S. policy toward Central America is particularly characterized by unchecked unilateral interests.⁷³ U.S. security and economic interests cannot be separated from moral-ideological approaches. The Western Hemisphere plays a special role in the perception by the United States that all American states build a community based on the same democratic-republican traditions.⁷⁴ Ideological mission legitimized territorial expansion and intervention in the Caribbean and Central America. According to this projection, political ideas that go beyond the principles of representative democracy and the market economy are seen as threats coming from foreign, i.e. non-U.S., sources. The reality becomes distorted.⁷⁵ Goals such as social justice and alternative forms of democracy are misinterpreted and can lead to, as in the case with President Reagan but also under President Carter, alliances with repressive regimes.⁷⁶

In general, one can conclude that U.S. interests during the Cold War have not changed radically from one administration to the next, but the value and priority that each administration attached to these interests often changed markedly. This was also the case between the Carter and Reagan presidency. Both thought to promote human rights and democracy, but policymakers in the Carter administration gave the issue a higher priority. Both wanted to prevent communist inroads in the Americas, but their understanding of the causes of the "communist" inclination differed. Policymakers in the

⁶⁹ Rosa, *AID*, 114.

⁷⁰ Diskin, "El Salvador," 73.

⁷¹ Rosa, *AID*, 6.

⁷² See chapter 3.1.5.

⁷³ Knud Krakau, "Die politischen Beziehungen zwischen Nord- und Südamerika: Von der Monroe-Doktrin zum Interamerikanischen System," in Krakau, *Lateinamerika*, 182-198, 185f.

⁷⁴ Krakau, "Lateinamerika-Politik," 31.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 37 and Schlesinger, "Foreign Policy," 6.

⁷⁶ Krakau, "Lateinamerika-Politik," 32, 42. The flexible concept of the Monroe Doctrine serves as a defense against non-American powers in order to secure the inner-American community. It is almost impossible to define the Monroe Doctrine because it stands for those principles that policymakers project into it. Regarding its "political myth" and function in the 1980s, see Krakau, "Policy as Myth," 255-266.

Reagan administration believed the ideological and foreign threat to be so dire that the immense funding and training of a foreign army and the intense involvement in the civil war was justifiable.

Many studies cultivate analyses about the U.S. foreign policy impact on Central America and El Salvador in the 1980s and in the years after the civil war. Much less has been said about the impact of the civil war on the United States. The indirect participation of the United States in the civil war of El Salvador unleashed a vast domestic debate about U.S. foreign policy that was taking place as much in the U.S. Congress as in the greater U.S. public.⁷⁷ One author notes that for the United States, "the real significance of Central America" lies in the "re-enactment of unresolved internal disputes about the nature of American society, and the purpose of American power."⁷⁸ Indeed, scholars have labeled the domestic battle in the United States about Central America the "most divisive" foreign policy issue since the Vietnam War.⁷⁹

One of the most important features of the domestic political battle in the United States was the emergence of "foreign-policy oriented grassroots movements."⁸⁰ Sociologist Christian Smith, who has written a detailed study about these Central America-oriented citizens' movements of the 1980s, asserts "more than one hundred thousand U.S. citizens mobilized to contest the chief foreign policy initiative of the most popular U.S. president in decades."⁸¹ The most significant aspect, in comparison to other citizens' movements like the anti-Vietnam War movement, was the participation of "religious-minded people" in foreign and security issues. In fact, the various Central America-oriented movements of the 1980s were "largely initiated, organized, and led by people of faith, mostly Christians."⁸² Most studies focusing on the subject have asserted

⁷⁷ The participation was indirect in the sense that the United States did not intervene with its own forces. It remains a matter of interpretation if a comparatively high increase in military assistance, the training of foreign soldiers, the growth of U.S. advisers abroad, and the establishment of training grounds in Honduras was an indirect or direct intervention. Historian Robert Leiken calls these measures "interventionist interests." Robert S. Leiken, "Overview: Can the Cycle Be Broken?," in *ibid.*, *Central America: Anatomy of Conflict* (New York: Pergamon, 1984), 10f.

⁷⁸ Whitehead, "Explaining Washington's," 358.

⁷⁹ See Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 361. Compare Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, xvii.

⁸⁰ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, xvi.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, xvii. Compare also Charles DeBenedetti, "American Peace Activism, 1945-1985," in Charles Chatfield and Peter van den Dungen (eds.), *Peace Movements and Political Cultures* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 225; Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 222; Brett, "The Attempts." There are several very critical studies of the involvement of liberal and radical religious groups in U.S. foreign affairs. Some of these studies are very accusatory in their argumentation and misrepresent a number of facts about the groups involved. See Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and*

that this loose network of groups and movements exerted some influence on the policymaking process in Washington, although they were not able to change the official foreign policy toward El Salvador or other Central American countries.⁸³ Furthermore, and this aspect is significant for a detailed assessment of civic foreign policy, the religious groups and individuals involved in the "movement" influenced each other and their institutions. While the younger and more grassroots-oriented groups developed new and very specific strategies and activities, the more established groups (like WOLA, the AFSC, the Maryknoll order or the Catholic Church) presented detailed foreign policy concepts on Capitol Hill.

Having taken a look at various religious groups' foreign policy activism in the late 1970s in chapter three, the continued response and engagement of Catholic, mainline Protestant and peace churches and ecumenical NGOs, in the context of the deteriorating social and political conditions in El Salvador, does not seem surprising. Starting in 1980, however, their activism climaxed to unprecedented heights. The outreach broadened and new organizations were founded. The following pages describe the institutional changes of religious groups' Central America policy and investigate the religious community's foreign policy arguments related to El Salvador. I will briefly conclude with the groups' "impact" on the national policymaking process as well as on the greater public.

4.3 The Response of the U.S. Religious Community

Shortly after the State Department published its White Paper on "Communist Interference in El Salvador" in February 1981, President Reagan asked the U.S. Congress for a sharp increase in U.S. military and economic aid to the Salvadoran junta government. U.S. churches and religious human rights groups reacted immediately and vigorously. Individual Catholic orders, religious missionaries, and religious human rights and social justice groups had already increasingly lobbied President Carter as well as President-elect Reagan during the months of November and December of 1980. The new Republican administration's assertive action on El Salvador triggered an even larger response by the religious community. During all of 1981, members of Congress received numerous letters, phone calls, visits, and information packets protesting the foreign

Abroad 1965-1990 (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), chapter 2 and Guenter Lewy, *Peace and Revolution: The Moral Crisis of American Pacifism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), chapter 8.

⁸³ Compare Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 372; Schoultz, *National Security*, 4 and 22; Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith, *Modern Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 351; Forsythe, *The Internationalization of Human Rights*, 189f.; Brett, "The Attempts," 793.

policy objectives of President Reagan.⁸⁴ Between December 1980 and December 1981 the major mainline Protestant churches, the peace churches, the Catholic Church, and the reform Jewish Union of American Hebrew Congregations adopted resolutions urging the U.S. administration to terminate military aid and training for El Salvador.⁸⁵

4.3.1 The Murder of Archbishop Romero and four U.S. Churchwomen

On the one hand, the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in March 1980 and of four U.S. churchwomen in December of 1980 were the catalysts for a greater attention and awareness by many U.S. churches and religious groups in the following months.⁸⁶ On the other hand, less eminent cases of mass violence and suffering enraged the churches. A situation of fear and growing numbers of dead and displaced people enhanced a religious human rights and refugee network that included traditional relief agencies, grassroots NGOs, missionary societies, advocacy groups, denominations, individual churches, and individual religious leaders. This study focuses only on the network that emanated in the United States. Apart from the U.S. side, many more internationally-based or foreign-based organizations belonged to the greater web of NGOs that framed the nongovernmental political process concerning El Salvador.

At the time of Romero's murder, an ecumenical delegation comprising members of the NCC, the USCC, the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Men,⁸⁷ the Society of Quakers, and the AFSC leadership was visiting El Salvador on a fact-finding tour. Shortly after Romero's death, they paid a visit to U.S. Ambassador Robert White to emphasize the Salvadoran security forces' role in the killing of Archbishop Romero and in the atrocities and human rights violations being committed in the countryside.⁸⁸ After returning to the United States, the delegation disseminated its information and called for the termination of U.S. assistance to military and police forces.⁸⁹ Religious groups receiving this information entered the debate as additional lobbying forces.⁹⁰ Romero's

⁸⁴ Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 362.

⁸⁵ See *Peacemaking: U.S. Religious Statements on El Salvador* (New York: IRTF, 1981).

⁸⁶ Compare Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 149; Brett, "The Attempts," 777.

⁸⁷ The Association of Major Religious Superiors of Men is the umbrella organization of U.S. male Roman Catholic orders.

⁸⁸ Confidential Cable from Ambassador White, El Salvador, to the Ambassador in Mexico and the Secretary of State, 29 March 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00572.

⁸⁹ Information from AFSC in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3.

⁹⁰ See correspondence between Senator Hatfield and John Halbert, Vicar General of Maryknoll, 9 April 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 2: Misc.Csp. 1974-1984/U.S. Congress; President, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1971-1980.

assassination also unified the stand of the U.S. Catholic bishops. While it was the USCC's Office on Social Justice and Peace that had been most engaged in questions of human rights, military aid, and U.S. foreign policy in El Salvador, the bishops spoke much more with a single voice regarding U.S. policy after March 1980. According to the Latin America specialist of the USCC, Thomas Quigley, the "bishops felt that one of theirs, Oscar Romero, had been slain."⁹¹

The continuous harassment of the Salvadoran Archbishop's legal aid office, Socorro Jurídico, and the Jesuit order resulted in additional lobbying in June and July of 1980.⁹² Since its monitoring and collection of information on human rights violations by the state in 1978, the government and paramilitary groups had been attacking Socorro Jurídico.⁹³ Thus, it became a symbol of Oscar Romero's struggle for the protection of human rights. In the eyes of the Jesuits, it was "the major source of reliable information on government-supported and para-military repression."⁹⁴ Missionary reports from abroad enhanced the increased concern. Moreover, reports from abroad described the escalation of the conflict throughout the year 1980 by including very specific information about the activities of the various military and paramilitary organizations, the sentiments of the population, and commentaries regarding government programs sponsored by the U.S. government.⁹⁵ These highly alert reports came from missions and U.S. missionaries who had been working in Latin America for over twenty years.

Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel's Latin American Mission Team from the Diocese of Cleveland, for example, had been set up in 1964 following Pope John XXIII's call upon the U.S. Catholic Church to send missionaries to Latin America. Sister Kazel had arrived in El Salvador in 1975.⁹⁶ Briefly before she was killed along with three other

⁹¹ Quoted in Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 150.

⁹² Telex from Jesuits in San Salvador to Jesuit Mission, Washington D.C., and forwarded to Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, 5 July 1980; Maryknoll Vicar General John Halbert to Secretary of State Muskie and President Carter on 9 July 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 2: Misc.Csp. 1974-1984/U.S. Congress; President, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1971-1980.

⁹³ Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 187.

⁹⁴ Telex from Jesuits in San Salvador to Jesuit Mission, Washington D.C., and forwarded to Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, 5 July 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 2: Misc.Csp. 1974-1984/U.S. Congress; President, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1971-1980.

⁹⁵ See reports and memorandums, in: MSA, H3.4, Box 1: Middle American Region, Folder: Panama-Nicaragua-El Salvador-Background, Reports, Handbook 1974-1980; H3.4, Box 5: Guatemala, Folder Sister Ministry in El Salvador-History/Background Csp., Articles 1969-1993; MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3. Letter from Sister Anne M. Cahill, President of the Dominican Sisters, to Secretary of State, Muskie, 20 November 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00869.

⁹⁶ Among Kazel's activities was the preparation of native lay people to become catechists, the instruction of women in basic nutrition, hygiene etc. Her parish in La Union was transferred from the Cleveland team to the native clergy in 1977, after which she worked for another Cleveland mission in La

U.S. missionaries in December 1980, she had informed President Carter in September 1980 that U.S. aid is directly linked to the security forces' house searches and killings in remote areas. Being supplied with vehicles and communication devices by the United States, soldiers are able to pursue such action, she argued.⁹⁷ Criticism centered on the military, as well as economic, objectives of the foreign policy program in 1980. In a report to the Maryknoll Fathers' and Brothers' justice and peace office, Joan Petrick, one of the five Maryknoll Sisters in El Salvador in 1980, was very critical of the land reform initiated by the Junta government in March 1980, which was welcomed and endorsed by the U.S. government. She argued that "[t]he land reform program, whatever its good points, has come too late. The soldiers who enforce it are hated by the majority of Salvadorans."⁹⁸ Eventually, Maryknoll and other groups came to view the junta government in 1980 as an unreliable partner for U.S. foreign policy objectives.⁹⁹ In September 1980, John Halbert, the Vicar General of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers stated, "the [Salvadoran] 'government' is o.k. - but out of control. The control was formerly the rich. Now the control is the military."¹⁰⁰

By November 1980, the lobbying efforts of U.S. religious groups had also shifted toward the plight of displaced persons (DPs) in El Salvador and refugees who had sought refuge in Honduras. The violent and economically deteriorating situation in El Salvador had already produced some refugees before the escalation of the conflict in 1980.¹⁰¹ The growth of refugees and DPs, however, began with the army's occupation of land property after the announcement of the agricultural reform in March 1980. As noted above, the implementation of the new law escalated the violence rather than reducing it. When the reform General Colonel Majano was removed as joint commander of the military in May

Libertad. See Dorothy C. Kazel, *Alleluia Woman: Sister Dorothy Kazel, O.S.U.* (Cleveland, OH: Chapel, 1987), 17, 23.

⁹⁷ Kazel, *Alleluia Woman*, 37f.

⁹⁸ Report by Joan Petrick, May 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3. Historian Dunkerly explains that only a tiny faction of the rural poor benefited from the "flawed and crippled" land reform but that, overall, it had an "impact upon the classic peasant vision of limited good and strategies of survival under the conditions of disruption and violence reigning after 1980." In the restricted choice elections of 1982 and 1984, the Christian Democratic Party in favor of the reform was able to gain support from the rural population. Dunkerly, *Power*, 394.

⁹⁹ See e.g. Brian Hehir, USCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March, 9 April 1981, 104f.; Open Letter by CALC to President-elect Ronald Reagan, 17 December 1980, in: Peacemaking, 24f.; WOLA, "The Carter Administration and Human Rights," *Latin America Update* 5:5 (September/October 1980), 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum by John Halbert to Dan Driscoll, 4 September 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3.

¹⁰¹ Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 75. See chapter 5.2 for further information regarding the history of the refugee movement.

1980 (later, he was also expunged as a member of the junta), so-called "search and destroy" operations in rural areas became a common feature of the military's operations and forced many peasants to flee. The army swept especially those regions where popular support for the guerrillas was high.¹⁰²

The Salvadoran Catholic Church responded to the new situation by turning church sites into temporary refugee camps.¹⁰³ By the end of 1980, ten church refugee centers provided humanitarian assistance.¹⁰⁴ Due to a lack of pastoral workers through the constant repression of members of religious orders, missionaries, and lay workers,¹⁰⁵ Archbishop Romero had first called for an "*acompañamiento*" in 1979 and for support in order to form refugee emergency committees in March 1980.¹⁰⁶ Two Maryknoll Sisters who had originally been located in Chile responded to a Maryknoll request for placing more people in El Salvador in November 1979.

Shortly after the death of Archbishop Romero, they started to work for a temporary refugee center in Chalatenango, a rural area that faced increasing military repression.¹⁰⁷ In July 1980, the two Sisters, Carla Piette and Ita Ford, reported increasing refugee movements as a result of a growing military repression. The region of their mission, Chalatenango, was targeted by the army because of a general strong support of the popular peasant organization (FECCAS) among the populace. Due to its demilitarized location at the border to Honduras, Chalatenango was also chosen as a training camp for the military arm of the popular organizations. Piette and Ford wrote that a "terrific fear" among displaced families generated "an atmosphere of trust everywhere."¹⁰⁸ They lament the limitation of their own pastoral work caused by the overall situation. Like many other church refuges, military units surrounded the

¹⁰² Despite the high popular support for the guerrillas in such areas, the war presented the population of these rural areas with little options. Being trapped between two fronts, they could take up arms, collaborate with the military, or flee their homes. Dunkerly, *Power*, 398.

¹⁰³ Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ Report by Ita Ford, November 22, 1980 to PANISA, in: MSA, A10 OSC El Salvador Martyrs, Box 7: Solidarity/Information Publications, Folder: Background of Maryknoll Sisters work in Chalatenango.

¹⁰⁵ See Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 71 and 243 (notes) concerning the declining number of priests and religious between 1978 and 1981. He relies on two different sources. The numbers vary, with one source stating an approximate decline of 35 percent, and the other reports a decline of 12.5 percent. The last account includes only priests.

¹⁰⁶ In August 1979, Romero asked church people to "accompany the people." See Report of Maryknoll Sisters in El Salvador, 29 March 1980, and request by Archdiocese of San Salvador, in: MSA, H3.4, Box 5: Guatemala, Folder: Sister Ministry in El Salvador-History/Background/Csp. Articles 1969-1993; "A Brief History of El Salvador Mission" by Madeline Dorsey, May 1992, in: MSA, H3.4, Box 1: Middle American Region, Folder: Mexico-Guatemala-El Salvador History Project from 1955-1991.

¹⁰⁷ Report by Carla Piette and Ita Ford, 20 July 1980, in: MSA, A10 OSC, Box 7: El Salvador Martyrs, Folder: Background of Maryknoll Sisters work in Chalatenango.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

Maryknoll-supported center in Chalatenango. In this case, there were four different units: the Army, the National Guard, the National Police, and the Treasury police.¹⁰⁹ The danger of belonging to (the active arm of) the Catholic Church was not reduced with Romero's death. The legal aid office of the Archdiocese reported 180 acts of violence against church workers and lay activists between January and October 1980, including 28 assassinations.¹¹⁰ In due course, the two Maryknoll Sisters were aware that they could not proceed with their regular pastoral work of visiting, meeting, and being with people "because...of the very real fear of placing others in danger because of belonging to the Church..."¹¹¹

For the U.S. religious community, circumstances changed after December 1980. On 2 December 1980, the two Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, as well as Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and a lay worker of the Diocese of Cleveland, Jean Donovan, were killed by members of the Salvadoran security forces. They had worked with the DPs and war victims in the newly established refugee centers and local neighborhoods. While driving from the airport near San Salvador, the four women had been abducted by Salvadoran National Guardsmen. After taking them to a less frequented road, the group of soldiers abused the women sexually and then shot them. The bodies were found on the 4th of December after two days of intensive searching initiated by the pastor of Sister Dorothy Kazel's mission.¹¹² Following the incident, President Carter established a Special Mission to investigate the murders in December 1980. The Salvadoran Government also formed an Investigating Committee.¹¹³ Although the U.S. President's Special Mission published an official report on 23 December 1980,

¹⁰⁹ Background paper of the Office of Social Concerns, 23 February 1982, all in: MSA, A10 OSC, Box 7: El Salvador Martyrs, Folder: Background of Maryknoll Sisters work in Chalatenango

¹¹⁰ Berryman quotes from a report by Socorro Jurídico (*El Salvador: Del genocidio de la junta militar a la esperanza de la lucha insurreccional*) in *Stubborn Hope*, 67. Sister Ita Ford reported the number of assassinations back home: Report by Ita Ford, 22 November 1980, in: MSA, A10 OSC, Box 7: El Salvador Martyrs, Folder: Background of Maryknoll Sisters work in Chalatenango

¹¹¹ Report by Carla Piette and Ita Ford, 20 July 1980; report by Ita Ford, 22 November 1980; and background paper of the Office of Social Concerns, 23 February 1982, all in: MSA, A10 OSC, Box 7: El Salvador Martyrs, Folder: Background of Maryknoll Sisters work in Chalatenango

¹¹² Documentation, background, and details of the murder of the women and their mission can be found in: MSA, A10 OSC, El Salvador Martyrs, Box 5: Investigation/Certification and Box 7: Solidarity/Information Publications. Further material relating to the murders is documented in *El Salvador: War, Peace, and Human Rights, 1980-1994* and in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*. Various books give a biographical history of the four: Ana Carrigan, *Salvador Witness: The Life and Calling of Jean Donovan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984); Brett, *Murdered in Central America*; Kazel, *Alleluia Woman*; Phyllis Zagano, *Ita Ford: Missionary Martyr* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996).

¹¹³ See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March and 9 April 1981, 195f. For full documentation regarding the case and its investigation, see Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 81-88.

reporting that the case evidence "implies involvement of Salvadoran armed forces," details about the murder and especially the chain of command did not become public until much later.¹¹⁴ In 1984, the five national guardsmen were convicted in El Salvador and sentenced to 30 years in prison for the murders. Four of the five soldiers admitted to having acted on orders from superiors in 1998 which led to the trial of the former Secretary of Defense, José Guillermo García, and the former head of the National Guard, General Carlos Eugenio Vides Casanova, in October and November 2000 in Florida.¹¹⁵

The churchwomen's death unleashed a chain of assertive action with respect to U.S. policy and its connection to the situation in El Salvador. The murder epitomized the plight of religious workers, whether engaged in progressive reform projects or merely assisting the poor and war victims. For some members of the left-liberal Christian community, it enhanced already existing sympathies for left-wing forces demanding radical changes.¹¹⁶ As in the case with Archbishop Romero, the greater majority of U.S. clergymen, nuns, religious workers, and faith-based activists were morally outraged by the killings of people who were regarded as one of their own. The killings effected groups at the grassroots as much as in the church hierarchy. Archbishop James Hickey of Washington explained the U.S. Catholic bishops' position concerning the conflict in El Salvador by pointing out especially the involvement of the four churchwomen with the poor in the region. Two of them had served at his particular request:

...I have had a personal connection with the situation in El Salvador. I maintained regular contact with them [pastoral team of his diocese in El Salvador], visited them often, talked with the Church leaders in El Salvador, came to know the people and their country. Two of the missionaries who were slain, Sr. Dorothy Kazel and Miss Jean Donovan, served there at my request and direction. In consequence I speak from personal acquaintance with the work of the Church in El Salvador...¹¹⁷

The murder of U.S. citizens seemed to highlight the link between El Salvador's problems and the policies of the United States. And it deepened transnational religious solidarity. According to Maryknoll Sisters' President, Melinda Roper, "the deaths of the four

¹¹⁴ Report of the Special Mission to El Salvador, 23 December 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador:1977-1984*, doc. # 01070.

¹¹⁵ *The New York Times*, 19 October 2000, A13; *The New York Times*, 21 October 2000; *The New York Times*, 2 November 2000. García and Casanova had been residing in Florida since 1989. Family members of the four women had sued García and Casanova under the 1992 Torture Victim Protection Act that allows victims or surviving relatives to sue people who may know of crimes or their probability but did not take actions to prevent them. Both officers admitted abuses being committed by members of the security forces but stressed that they were not responsible for the murders.

¹¹⁶ LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*, 224.

¹¹⁷ Archbishop James A. Hickey, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March and 9 April 1981, 167.

women cannot be separated from the general pattern of persecution of the church in El Salvador and from the deaths of thousands of innocent Salvadorans. Nor do I believe the deaths can be separated from U.S. policy toward that government."¹¹⁸

The murders received wide international media attention. Although the details of the murders were not known at the time, for the religious community the involvement of members of the Salvadoran national security forces was certain from the beginning. Responding to a domestic outcry and signaling protest to the U.S. supported Salvadoran junta government, the Carter administration - already defeated in the presidential elections a month earlier - cut military aid.¹¹⁹ This gesture of distress concerning the human rights violations committed by members of the military and the inability of the government to exercise control over its security forces lasted only until early January 1981. The administration reinstated military aid when the FMLN launched its three-week long "final offensive."¹²⁰

Internationally, the incident revealed the constant state of violence in El Salvador and the association of the government with atrocities against its own citizens. For the concerned religious community in the United States, it highlighted the tragic events they had been informed about throughout 1980 and before. For groups such as WOLA, the Catholic bishops, Maryknoll, the NCC, and especially members of the Roman Catholic women's religious orders, it symbolized the Carter administration's contradictory role in the affairs of El Salvador. It has been noted that the ascendance of Ronald Reagan as President marked a fundamental shift in lobbying and grassroots activity of the religious human rights community. By making Central America "a national political preoccupation," one activist argues, the President himself was the "father" of the growth of the movement in the 1980s.¹²¹ President Reagan's policy priorities regarding El Salvador placed the U.S. administration and a large sector of the Christian community at opposite ends of the foreign policy discourse. The first signs of major disappointment with the official foreign policy decision-making process and disappointment regarding the course of U.S. foreign policy, however, began in the last year of the Carter presidency.

In February 1980, Archbishop Romero had appealed to Jimmy Carter's concern for human rights and religious sentiments. Compassionately, he urged the U.S. President

¹¹⁸ Statement of Melinda Roper, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 9 April 1981, 192.

¹¹⁹ Dunkerly, *Power*, 399.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 400.

¹²¹ See Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 89.

to refrain from using his power in El Salvador. The bishop warned particularly against military aid and training.¹²² One month later, extremist right-wing forces assassinated Romero while he was saying mass. Bombs and shootings interrupted his funeral, which had drawn a crowd of people and observers from abroad; approximately 26 people died, most of them crushed by fleeing crowds.¹²³ The Catholic bishops and other U.S. denominations and religious groups had supported Romero's petition.¹²⁴ The transnational religious identity that had grown stronger in the 1970s became a guiding principle for the U.S. Catholic Church in the 1980s.¹²⁵ WOLA, which had welcomed Carter's human rights policy during the first half of his term, published a very critical account of Carter's Latin America policy in September/October 1980 accusing the administration of giving in on human rights pressures.

The Carter administration showed no sign of conciliation. It had started to support the various junta governments between October 1979 and January 1981 with economic and military aid, hoping to prevent a victory of either the extremist right or left. When religious clergymen and officials communicated data of human rights violations committed by the Salvadoran government's security forces, the administration responded by pointing to atrocities of the left, although admitting to violence by the military and paramilitary groups.¹²⁶ After the guerrillas of the FMLN instigated an insurrection, President Carter ordered for the re-installment of military aid in January 1981. The halt of the aid only three weeks earlier remained but a short-term sympathetic gesture.

The Catholic community in the United States responded to the murder of the four women with a wave of revulsion. The Maryknoll order was thrown onto the political stage. The murder of two of their Sisters and Maryknoll's long-term engagement, and particularly its position regarding social and political aspects, in Central America became highly politicized issues in the early 1980s. The order was especially attacked by

¹²² Letter by Archbishop Romero to President Carter, 17 February 1980, in: Leiken, *Central American Crisis Reader*, 503-504.

¹²³ Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 65.

¹²⁴ Statement of Bryan Hehir, USCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 104.

¹²⁵ In 1981, the U.S. bishops e.g. emphasized that their perspective on the conflict in El Salvador derives "from the viewpoint of the church there." See *ibid*.

¹²⁶ Confidential Cable from Ambassador White, El Salvador, to the Ambassador in Mexico and the Secretary of State, 29 March 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00572. In a letter to the Columbian order in the United States from 11 November 1980, U.S. Ambassador Robert White describes the growing violence on the side of the far left. He points out that the Catholic Church started to denounce violence on the left as well as the right. See MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder: 3.

conservative forces within the Christian community who accused the society of an inclination toward Marxist/Communist thought.¹²⁷

Maryknoll had been the subject of the U.S. discourse on the Central American conflicts before. During the fall of 1979, when the Carter administration was seeking a position that would moderate the revolution in Nicaragua, Maryknoll priests, brothers, and sisters were looking forward to new possibilities of social and political reforms.¹²⁸ While the majority of Maryknoll missionaries served as pastoral agents in educational, health, or other social projects, one of their own became more directly involved in the revolutionary Sandinista government. Maryknoll priest Miguel d'Escoto did not only belong to the core of Catholic priests forming an opposition group against the Somoza dictatorship but he also became the left-wing government's two-term foreign minister.¹²⁹ While the Nicaraguan bishops ordered Father d'Escoto and the other three priests that held ministry positions to resign from their political posts, their respective orders did not openly contest their direct political involvement.¹³⁰ Maryknoll only released d'Escoto from direct society work as long as he was foreign minister.¹³¹

Because of the unresolved investigation of the churchwomen's murder, the orders and the victims' families came into direct contact with the foreign policy decision-making process of the administration. The official handling of the nuns' murder appalled those religious orders directly touched by the deaths. In a statement before the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, Maryknoll Sister's President Melinda Roper testified about the congregation's "less than satisfactory dealings with the State Department" since the death of the Maryknoll Sisters.¹³² In her criticism, Roper referred to both the Carter and Reagan administrations' "lack of communication, defensiveness,

¹²⁷ Strong public criticism came from Michael Novak and the conservative Institute on Religion and Democracy. See also chapter 4.4.

¹²⁸ Statement by Superior General James Noonan, 24 September 1979, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 3: Washington Justice and Peace Office 1974-1985, Folder: Washington Office 1983-1984. See also letters from Nicaragua in various related boxes and folders in MSA, H3.4.

¹²⁹ Berryman describes the involvement of Christians in the Nicaraguan popular rebellion of 1979 and in the Sandinista government during the 1980s in *Religious Roots of Rebellion* and *Stubborn Hope*.

¹³⁰ Berryman, *Stubborn Hope*, 28. In the end, the four priests were not expelled from the Church but had to refrain from exercising their ministry in public or private.

¹³¹ By being released from direct society work, Father d'Escoto was not allowed to vote in Society elections nor in meetings setting policies. See statement by Superior General James Noonan, 24 September 1979, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 3: Washington Justice and Peace Office 1974-1985, Folder: Washington Office 1983-1984.

¹³² U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 9 April 1981, 192.

evasion, and even contradictions."¹³³ Apart from a different understanding regarding the foreign policy means, the respective orders and families felt mistreated in the handling of the case. While the U.S. Ambassador in El Salvador, Robert White, had reacted promptly and with concern, the orders had received the majority of information regarding the discovery of the bodies and their identification from their own sources.¹³⁴ Meetings with President Carter's Secretary of State Edmund Muskie and other officials were arranged on the initiative of the order and the victims' families. Michael Donovan, the brother of the slain lay church worker Jean Donovan, told the Foreign Relations Committee, "[t]he only reactions I so far have elicited have been various attempts by the State Department to shut me up."¹³⁵ While the orders and the families were disenchanted by the lack of notification and condolences by the State Department in the last days of the Carter presidency, their furor was stirred by strong and evocative comments of various policy-makers of the new administration during December 1980 and March 1981. According to the newspaper *Tampa Tribune*, UN Ambassador designate and professor at the Jesuit Georgetown University Jeane Kirkpatrick argued that

"[t]he nuns were not just nuns. The nuns were also political activists. We ought to be a little more clear about this than we actually are. They were political activists on behalf of the Frente ..."¹³⁶

The new Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, and Assistant Secretary for Human Rights designate Ernest Lefever made similar accusatory remarks about the Sister's potential radical political role and behavior.¹³⁷ Such comments confirmed many religious activists' view that the new administration's El Salvador policy was misled and one-sided. Later apologies and downplaying of these earlier remarks did not change the schism. According to the distressed groups, in the transition period of the two administrations, they had both failed to show empathy when it was of highly symbolic importance.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 195f.

¹³⁵ Statement of Michael Donovan, in: *ibid.*, 197.

¹³⁶ Quoted in letter by William Ford and Michael Donovan, brothers of Ita Ford and Jean Donovan, to Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, 25 March 1981, in: *ibid.*, 204.

¹³⁷ Secretary Haig had suggested that the sisters had tried to run a roadblock, probably accompanied by an exchange of gunfire. See statement by Haig in U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee for Inter-American Affairs, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 163. Lefever is quoted by Donovan in U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 9 April 1981, 197. Secretary Haig later refined his words arguing, "the four American churchwomen were engaged in what we would regard as religious and social welfare work. Unfortunately, in the conflicted situation in El Salvador today, the dividing line between social activity and political activity has been obliterated. Extremists on the left and right tend to view very worthy and legitimate social activities, such as helping the poor and displaced to obtain food, clothing, shelter and medical attention, as 'political' acts which aid and abet their enemies...Kirkpatrick's remarks should be taken in the context of this Salvadoran reality." Secretary Haig to Senator Edward Kennedy, 15 April 1981,

4.3.2 Lobbying Against Military Aid

With the murder of the four U.S. citizens, the religious human rights network felt strengthened in its criticism of the security forces and their opposition to military aid throughout 1980. Because of the sensitivity of the subject of the brutal murders, the different set of priorities between the official foreign policy toward El Salvador and the objectives of church groups became more apparent. The core of the debate between religious NGOs and the U.S. government in 1980 and 1981 revolved around the question of military aid. It did not only serve as a common ground for the interested groups. As a policy issue, it was easier to mobilize around because of the more obvious connection between military rather than economic aid and violence.

With President Carter's decision to reinstall military aid, the religious groups felt yet more estranged from official foreign policy objectives. The Catholic Church's hierarchy in the United States was highly alarmed. After a year of lobbying against military aid, the Carter decision and President Reagan's interpretation of events in El Salvador according to cold war principles ran contrary to the Catholic bishops' position. Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul, Minneapolis, then President of the National Council of Catholic Bishops, expressed his Church's "profound disappointment and disagreement with the decision to renew military aid..."¹³⁸ Roach does not see "real evidence...that the government of El Salvador has brought the security forces under control..."¹³⁹ In his eyes, the continuation of aid will rather enhance violence by the security forces.¹⁴⁰ While the bishops and representatives of their public policy arm, the USCC, appeared before various Congressional committees in March and April 1981 in order to "ask for reconsideration of our present course,"¹⁴¹ the advocacy activity of its missionaries abroad and its constituency at home toward the religious community, the hierarchy, and the government was at high levels.

In an open letter to their bishops, 266 North American missionaries in Latin America from a wide variety of Catholic orders felt that "[u]nder the Carter Administration, there was some possibility to redress this situation, albeit in a limited way. There are some serious indications that the same might not be true under the

in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 2: Misc. Csp.: 1974-84, U.S. Congress, President: 1949-84, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1981-84.

¹³⁸ Quoted in *WOLA Update* 6:1 (January/February 1981), 3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Reagan Administration."¹⁴² Accordingly, they asked for intensive pastoral effort at the local level to inform and involve people in the United States. They suggested that the period between the 24th of March and the 2nd of December should be announced as the "Year of the Latin American Martyrs." Furthermore, they proposed visits to Latin America, offered their own service to talk about their experience when "home on furlough", and asked for increased funding for local diocesan Justice and Peace offices as well as the national one.¹⁴³ On 14 December 1980, the officially recognized human rights day, the subject of El Salvador was the issue of many church sermons and readings in the pulpits. Archbishop Roach called upon his constituency to lobby the government to stop military aid and secure human rights standards.¹⁴⁴ In the meantime, U.S. citizens of several religious groups residing in Mexico gathered in front of the U.S. embassy in early February 1981. They asked publicly for an end of U.S. involvement in El Salvador stressing that further support for "unpopular illegitimate regimes, such as the Salvadorean Junta" would compromise "the values and aspirations of the American people."¹⁴⁵ Representatives of religious advocacy groups, such as WOLA or the 1980-established Inter-Religious Task Force on El Salvador, Protestant denominations and NCC staff gathered to assemble information regarding the new administration and the new Congress and discuss common strategies to challenge the official foreign policy.¹⁴⁶

Like their missionaries, the Catholic bishops felt that there was a "common ground" between the Carter Administration's and their own view regarding the internal causes - social injustice and denial of basic human rights - of the Salvadoran conflict. Nevertheless, there had been disagreement about the policy means. The Carter administration's reasoning that military aid was needed in order to train soldiers and

¹⁴¹ Statement of Bryan Hehir, USCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 107.

¹⁴² They referred to the murders of the four U.S. Americans as the "tip of the iceberg" and further wrote that "for each religious who has died, at least one thousand of the poor have met a similar fate, and for each death another thousand have been tortured, detained, imprisoned...the Church is alive and growing stronger among the poor in LA...the deaths of our sisters brings it home." 95 of the signers were Maryknollers (one of them an associate). Others belonged to the St. Joseph-Carondelet, Norbertine, Benedictine, Ursuline, or Jesuit orders. Some were diocesan clergy. Open letter to the U.S. bishops [no date; approximately end of 1980/beginning of 1981] in: MSA, A10 OSC, El Salvador Martyrs, Box 7: Solidarity/Information Publications, Folder: Various sources, 1980-1984.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Statement of Archbishop Roach, 4 December 1980, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3.

¹⁴⁵ Letter from U.S. Ecumenical Group in Mexico to President Reagan Regarding El Salvador, 5 February 1981, in: LADOC 11:5 (May/June 1981), 31-34, 34. "...we are convinced that justice and peace will become a reality only when the people of El Salvador are allowed to freely exercise those very same rights upon which our country was founded."

avoid, thereby, human rights violations, did not appeal to those groups that were directly or indirectly touched with death and murder. For them, military aid and the employment of military advisers fostered the violence, linked the United States with repression, and failed to control the security forces.¹⁴⁷ According to the bishops, such policies ran counter to U.S. interests and values:

...in the same long term our American government should be remembered, not as a supplier of arms used to kill the people, but as a government that stood for the dignity and integrity of the human person and the free exercise of God-given rights. This is our American heritage and tradition.¹⁴⁸

In contrast to the hierarchy, the Maryknoll Sisters questioned U.S. economic aid as well. In a meeting with Secretary Muskie, they called upon the termination of all aid to El Salvador because of evidence revealing the military's misuse of equipment and aid given for economic projects.¹⁴⁹ The Maryknoll Sisters also did not just simply welcome the termination of military aid in December 1980. In conversations with governmental officials, they pointed out that the current halt of aid did not apply to the military equipment already contracted.¹⁵⁰ Accordingly, this equipment reached the Salvadoran government despite the symbolic gesture. In January 1981, the Maryknoll society was rather disillusioned regarding positive results of any short-term type of U.S. foreign policy. In a letter to Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, the General Secretary of the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, argued, "[i]f there was anything we could do, as a nation, to solve the social and economic problems of El Salvador, it should have been done several decades ago."¹⁵¹

The policy concept of the Reagan administration challenged the Catholic Church's basic understanding of the domestic causes of the conflict. In its opinion, the analysis of Salvadoran conflict according to the East-West paradigm "concentrates attention, at the level of policy and public opinion, not on the fate and future of the

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of Committee on the Caribbean and Latin America, NCC, 13 February 1981, in: NCC Office for International Justice and Peace, Latin America files, Folder: DOM-Caribbean and Latin America Policy Statement. (April 2000).

¹⁴⁷ See e.g. Archbishop's Hickey's statement in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 168.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Notes on meeting with Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie, on 22 December 1980, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 208.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 208f.

¹⁵¹ Letter from Noonan to Muskie, 14 January 1981, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 2: Misc.Csp. 1974-1984/U.S. Congress; President, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1971-1980.

people of El Salvador, but on the role of the Soviet Union..."¹⁵² The Church rejected the intervention from the Soviet Union, Cuba, or the United States, but focused on foreign policy suggestions for the United States, hoping to contribute to the long-term interests of the United States as well as the Salvadoran people. Along with the representative bodies of the female and male Catholic orders, the bishops called for a halt of all military aid and a political solution to the conflict in March 1981.¹⁵³

All the other denominations and religious groups that issued statements on El Salvador agreed with the Catholic Church's rejection of military aid when President Reagan announced a substantial increase in 1981. Due to Reagan's aid request, Congressional leaders summoned hearings to review the policy. Subsequently, the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee both amended the fiscal year 1982 Foreign Assistance Authorization by conditioning U.S. aid on the human rights performance of the Salvadoran government. Aware of the political discussions in Washington, the liberal and moderate wing of the mainline Protestant churches, the reformed Jewish congregations of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Quakers, Brethren, Unitarian Universalists, and representatives of the evangelical Protestants' small liberal wing appealed to their constituencies, the U.S. Congress, and the President between March and November 1981. The great majority presented similar arguments to those of the Catholic Church, relating to the inefficiency of military aid for a political, non-violent solution and its contributing factor to human suffering. While a handful of liberal Protestant denominations accused the Reagan administration of making El Salvador "a battleground for its own political interests,"¹⁵⁴ most refrained from direct attacks. All called for a de-escalation of the violent conflict.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, all pointed out the necessity of relief aid. The issue of Salvadoran civil war refugees had also become part of the political discourse surrounding El Salvador.

In late September 1981, the Senate voted in favor of conditioning U.S. aid. By the end of the year, both houses adopted the long-discussed legislation, thus ensuring that the Reagan administration had to certify an improvement of the human rights violations in El Salvador for the subsequent two years. In the meantime, the Reagan administration

¹⁵² Statement of Bryan Hehir, USCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *The Situation in El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18 March 1981, 105.

¹⁵³ Joint statement on El Salvador of the USCC, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 2 March 1981, in: *Peacemaking* (1981), 21.

¹⁵⁴ Statement on El Salvador, 24 March 1981, by Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. (includes the Lutheran Church in America, American Lutheran Church, Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and Lutheran World Ministries) in: *Peacemaking* (1981), 13.

¹⁵⁵ All statements in *Peacemaking* (1981).

had changed its rhetoric. Facing criticism in Congress, it had started to embrace social and political reforms such as land reform and elections as additional means and goals of its foreign policy toward El Salvador.¹⁵⁶ The religious human rights network in Washington noted the administration's new tone, tracing it back to growing pressure from U.S. public opinion and a "growing uneasiness in Congress."¹⁵⁷ WOLA and other religious human rights groups, however, were not convinced about the effectiveness of the new emphasis. While the administration sought to promote elections, WOLA did not consider this to be a worthwhile option "within the environment of a military struggle which most predict will not end in the near future."¹⁵⁸

Accordingly, WOLA and the network of denominations and religious groups¹⁵⁹ voiced their opposition to the President's certification of an improvement in El Salvador's human rights situation. The Foreign Aid Bill, signed into law in late December 1981, required the President to submit a report to Congress regarding the situation in El Salvador that included five points of discussion regarding the performance of the Junta government: 1) that it makes a concerted effort to comply with internationally recognized human rights; 2) that it achieves control over all elements of its own armed forces; 3) that it is committed to hold free elections; 4) that it makes efforts to implement economic and political reforms; 5) that it makes effort in investigating the murders of the six U.S. citizens killed in December 1980 and January 1981.

When President Reagan certified the improvements on 28 January 1982, to justify his military and economic aid program, religious groups once again lobbied the U.S. Congress to reject the increase of military aid. Using church, IGO, and media sources, WOLA analyzed all five points of the certification requirement and came to the conclusion that the Salvadoran government had met none of the conditions in 1981.¹⁶⁰ Recommending policies for the United States, WOLA suggested an overhaul of the military hierarchy and that U.S. policy should be guided by a concern for the non-combatant victims of violence. Regarding the election proposals for 1982, WOLA questioned the identification of democracy with elections. It attempted to dismantle the

¹⁵⁶ Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 362f.

¹⁵⁷ *Latin America Update* 6:4 (July/August 1981), 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Statements of the Catholic bishops, Maryknoll, the Unitarian Universalists, the Center of Concern, the Coalition for a New and Foreign Military Policy, and the NCC are in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 107-119.

¹⁶⁰ Statement by WOLA in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 113-119.

"myth" that democracy is necessarily defined as participation through the vote. It affirmed that elections are an important element of democracy, but could not serve as the ultimate criteria and should be seen within the larger context of political freedom and representation.¹⁶¹

Due to the dangerous conditions, a major sector of the Salvadoran representative bodies, i.e. the FDR, had chosen to abstain from electoral participation. The self-chosen absence limited the political choice of the citizens significantly, a fact that WOLA interpreted as a major obstacle to full democracy. Other religious groups also used the formal procedures of democratic elections to convince U.S. legislators of the democratic deficits in El Salvador in 1982. In a letter to Senators before the second certification process in the summer of 1982, Maryknoll's Peace and Justice Office director, Tom Marti, pointed out the mandatory voting procedure in El Salvador that in his eyes limited political freedom.¹⁶²

The NCC voiced similar concerns about the electoral solution in El Salvador. After a fact-finding trip to El Salvador in October 1981, a delegation of the NCC concluded its findings with the observation that "the political space" had been reduced during the last two years rather than broadened.¹⁶³ After conversations with members of the Salvadoran Catholic and Protestant community, the NCC concludes that "[c]onditions for a representative election are not currently present."¹⁶⁴ Not all the members of the NCC delegation, comprising representatives of the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, and Quaker denominations as well as NCC staff were convinced about the even representation of their sources. After the trip, the delegate of the Society of Friends reported being confused about the popular support in El Salvador and questioned the trip as having been constructed too narrowly.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Statement by Heather Foote, WOLA, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 100f.

¹⁶² Tom Marti to Senators Tsongas, Percy, Kassembaum, Cranston, and Dodd, 31 May 1982, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 2: Misc. Csp.: 1974-84, U.S. Congress, President: 1949-84, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1981-84.

¹⁶³ The Governing Board of the NCC adopted the delegations' suggestions as its own in November 1981. The delegations' members talked with various representatives of the Salvadoran religious community including members of relief agencies, Protestant churches, Catholic Church officials, evangelical pastors, and Jesuits.

¹⁶⁴ Report of El Salvador Trip, NCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 112.

¹⁶⁵ Letter to NCC regarding the NCC-trip to El Salvador from 24-28 October 1981, on file in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights Office files, Folder: El Salvador-1981 (April 2000).

In February 1982 the Salvadoran bishops announced that "the elections, even though held under the most abnormal conditions and circumstances, are the most peaceful means by which the majority of the people who have said NO to violence, may have the best means of expressing their will."¹⁶⁶ Taking their position from the Salvadoran episcopate, the U.S. Catholic bishops also welcomed the elections.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, they reasoned, "elections won't solve the...deeper political problem..."¹⁶⁸

4.3.3 Church Groups and the Distribution of U.S. Aid

While lobbying against military assistance in the United States, the same U.S. religious groups' relief agencies simultaneously engaged in direct relief assistance in Central America. In fact, the question of aid distribution in El Salvador and refugee assistance to camps in Honduras epitomized the more theoretical debate that took place in the United States. Traditionally, U.S. church agencies cooperate with the U.S. government in implementing refugee and relief programs abroad. In the case of El Salvador, the field workers of Catholic, mainline Protestant, and peace church groups were often at odds with the governmental program.

The Emergency and Humanitarian Aid Center in the Salvadoran Catholic Church's Vicariate was the first and major humanitarian agency providing assistance to DPs in 1980. The Lutheran Church in El Salvador, evangelical Protestant groups and other organizations followed.¹⁶⁹ Just as during the prewar conflict between progressives in the religious community and the state, the majority of Protestant churches tried to keep a low apolitical profile but some, like the Lutheran and Baptist church, found a new role in refugee assistance program throughout the 1980s.¹⁷⁰ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established an official program for Salvadoran refugees in 1981 after the civil unrest had moved into a civil war stage. The quick response of the Archdiocese was the result of its clear presence in El Salvador. It was also possible due to the historical link between the Church and many of the DPs who had been members of grassroots projects or Christian base communities in the 1970s. The

¹⁶⁶ Statement in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 201.

¹⁶⁷ Statement by Bryan Hehir, USCC, in: *ibid.*, 203.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ "Evangelicals Blossom Brightly amid El Salvador's Wasteland of Violence," *Christianity Today* (8 May 1981), 34-35; Peter Frisk, "Displaced Persons and Human Rights: The Crisis in El Salvador," *Third World Quarterly* 12:3-4 (1990/91): 40-63, 43f.

¹⁷⁰ Montgomery, "Liberation and Revolution," 93.

majority of refugees and displaced persons fled military operations. Being in opposition to the government and identifying with the activist and progressive wing of the Church, many DPs were naturally drawn to church refuges.¹⁷¹

The emergence of mass killings in the early years of the civil war prompting immediate migration, invoked traditional relief agencies to act. Missionaries, religious field officers, and human rights organizations like Amnesty International channeled information to nongovernmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. Amnesty International brought the situation of Salvadoran civil war refugees in Honduras, Mexico, and the United States to the attention of the UNHCR in August 1980. Amnesty International stressed the direct government persecution of many of these migrants, thereby making it a case for the UNHCR.¹⁷²

In the United States, the Committee on Migration and Refugee Affairs of the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service (ACVAFS) delivered a message of concern to President Carter in late November 1980. At that time, the migration committee of the ACVAFS incorporated the largest relief and refugee organizations in the United States of which the majority was religious-based.¹⁷³ NCC's Church World Service (CWS), the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the Migration and Refugee Service of the USCC, the Hebrew Immigration and Aid Service (HIAS), the evangelical World Relief, and the Young Men's Christian Association were among the religious agencies belonging to the umbrella agency.¹⁷⁴

In contrast to missionary societies in El Salvador engaging in programs for social reform or conversion, the work of these NGOs is in general less controversial because of the focus on immediate relief. As seen in previous chapters, many international programs of the members of the ACVAFS were based on a contract basis with the U.S. Agency for

¹⁷¹ Frisk, "Displaced Persons," 43f.

¹⁷² Letter from Amnesty International, International Secretariat, London, to Poul Hartling, UNHCR, Geneva, 19 August 1980, in: CCEIA, Box 773, Folder: Central America - El Salvador.

¹⁷³ The ACVAFS existed from 1943 until 1983. It was the main nongovernmental organization with which AID worked from the 1960s to the early 1980s when it was succeeded by Interaction. A government position paper from 1962 clarifies the relationship between voluntary private organizations and the newly established U.S. Agency for International Development (AID). Voluntary agencies have to be registered with AID in order to be entitled to work in government-sponsored relief and refugee projects. Furthermore, they have to share a common foreign policy objective: "To be approved by A.I.D. as partners in the foreign assistance effort, the programs of private agencies must be consistent with A.I.D.'s objectives and the over-all development program in the country concerned, and acceptable to the foreign government." See "Religious Organizations and the United States Aid Program," AID, 16 July 1962, in: CCIAE, Box 767, Folder: AID.

¹⁷⁴ Other members of the Refugee and Migration Affairs Committee were the American Council for Nationalities Service, the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, the International Rescue Committee, the Tolstoy Foundation. See telegram from the migration committee of the ACVAFS to

International Development (AID). Together, religious relief and refugee agencies and the U.S. government carried out assistance and development projects abroad and refugee programs at home. Historian Bruce Nichols has come to the conclusion that the history of the relationship between these religious relief agencies and the U.S. government has been largely characterized by programmatic and financial cooperation from the 1940s until the late 1960s.¹⁷⁵ Despite cracks in the Cold War consensus since the Vietnam War, both, the U.S. government and the voluntary agencies relied on the support and assistance of the other partner.¹⁷⁶

The concern and lobbying activism of such traditional and "non-radical" religious relief and development organizations demonstrated the plurality of religious-based NGOs involved in El Salvador activities. Accordingly, their objectives were diverse. Without attributing the increase in violence or migration to one side or the other, the relief agencies focused on the obvious "human tragedy."¹⁷⁷ By stressing their direct links to groups and individuals living in the region, they sought to stress the accuracy of their information and legitimize their foreign policy suggestions. Instead of calling for a halt in military assistance, the recommendations concentrated on an improvement of the immediate refugee situation. Noticing a "paucity of relief assistance able to enter the strife-ridden areas, and...the apparent reluctance of neighboring governments to offer refuge," the U.S. relief agencies asked President Carter to "urge and assist" the Honduran government to grant the entrance of Salvadoran refugees. They also recommended U.S. emergency assistance for the basic needs of these migrants.¹⁷⁸

President Jimmy Carter, 20 November 1980, in: ACVAFS, Box 15, Folder: Migration and Refugee Affairs Committee wire to President Carter.

¹⁷⁵ During most of its history, the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service agreed with the general U.S. foreign policy objectives, stressing the humanitarian and democratic ideals of the United States. According to a position paper from the late 1950s, U.S. foreign policy stands for "human dignity and freedom and concerns itself therefore with the complete well-being of people everywhere." See "Foreign Policy Objectives and the Voluntary Sector of Overseas Activity," 12 November 1958, in: ACVAFS, 655, Box 15, Folder: Position papers from 1950s/60s. In a keynote address at a Special Board Meeting in 1971, James MacCracken, a former director of CWS, hints at the ties between governmental and nongovernmental foreign policy objectives when arguing that the work of the ACVAFS is rooted in the four freedoms: peace, liberation, justice and development. "American Volags in Service Abroad: The Next Decade," 7 December 1971, in: ACVAFS, Box 14, Folder: Council Position Papers. For a further discussion of the relationship between religious relief and development agencies and the U.S. government, see Nichols, *Alliance*

¹⁷⁶ The church agencies often depended on government funds, while the governmental development and refugee programs relied on the voluntary agencies' insight, personnel, and organizational structure to implement projects.

¹⁷⁷ Telegram from the migration committee of the ACVAFS to President Jimmy Carter, 20 November 1980, in: ACVAFS, Box 15, Folder: Migration and Refugee Affairs Committee wire to President Carter.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

The President of the National Council of Churches, William Howard, sent a similar proposal to President Carter. He urged the government to use its influence to allow for the entry of humanitarian agencies in the Northeastern areas of El Salvador where the majority of DPs were located at the end of 1980.¹⁷⁹ Sister Anne Cahill, the President of the Dominican Sisters in the United States, also demanded humanitarian assistance for the region and for the DPs that were affected by the situation.¹⁸⁰ Her recommendations, however, also included the termination of military assistance. While she requested, "that we not intervene directly or indirectly with military, economic, diplomatic or other pressures to determine the destiny of the Salvadoran people," Cahill wanted the U.S. administration to pressure the Salvadoran government so that humanitarian aid can reach refugees.¹⁸¹ She disputed any kind of intervention that in her eyes would have increased the human suffering but sought the engagement of the United States in the region to improve the situation. Along with the Dominican Sisters' pledge, President Carter received a number of letters from Catholic congregations demanding the same policies throughout November.¹⁸²

In U.S. foreign aid programs, food and relief aid is primarily submitted through private voluntary agencies, most of which are religious groups.¹⁸³ As explained in chapter three, the large Catholic and mainline Protestant groups rely to a great extent on government funds while the peace church agencies - AFSC and the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) as well as Maryknoll - accept no funds or a very small amount. Some of them do not engage in contracts with the U.S. government at all. While most church leaders from the Catholic Church or Protestant denominations did not openly argue against economic assistance, their respective church relief agencies partly refused to accept government-granted food aid (PL 480) for El Salvador in the 1980s due to the underlying political subtext.

¹⁷⁹ William Howard, NCC, to President Carter, 10 November 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, NSA, doc. # 00848.

¹⁸⁰ Sister Anne M. Cahill, Dominican Sisters, to Edmund Muskie, Secretary of State, 20 November 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00869.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² Letters to the President by the Xaverian Brothers, 17 November 1980, by St. Joseph of Peace Sisters, 18 November 1980, and by the Catholic Church of Richmond, Virginia, 19 November 1980 in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00860, # 00861, # 00867.

¹⁸³ See Nichols, *Uneasy Alliance*; Smith, *More Than Altruism*. Since 1973, AID has channeled increasing amounts of its budget to private voluntary agencies. From 1973-1979, the amount grew from \$207,9 million to \$627,6 million.

Catholic Relief Services and the MCC operated the largest funding and aiding programs for the DP communities in El Salvador in the early 1980s.¹⁸⁴ Both cooperated with the Archdiocese of San Salvador in providing health services and food. The CRS did receive food commodities from the U.S. government, but they were not meant for the refugee community. When Catholic Relief Services wanted to re-channel government-granted food aid to the DP community in El Salvador in the early 1980s, the U.S. administration rejected the request.¹⁸⁵ Catholic Relief Services, the Mennonite Central Committee, and the Lutheran Church then discarded U.S. government food aid to El Salvador in 1985 because they did not want to support the U.S. government's indirect link to active forces of the civil war.¹⁸⁶ International relief agencies reacted similarly. Given the politicized conditions of the Salvadoran conflict and the U.S. role, the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) wanted to stay neutral and declined a U.S. proposal to act as the partner for the distribution of U.S. assistance to DPs in El Salvador.¹⁸⁷

The tension between Catholic, mainline Protestant, and peace churches' approach toward El Salvador's refugee problem and the U.S. administration was most notable in the refugee programs implemented in Honduras. After 1980, most Salvadoran refugees were located in UN refugee camps in Honduras and Mexico. Some U.S. economic aid was redistributed in those countries. The call for re-channeling U.S. food aid to refugee camps largely came from U.S. religious relief agencies like CRS and religious workers in the region. While the U.S. embassy agreed to re-channel food aid in Honduras in 1981/82, it requested a list with refugee data in response, given the ties between some refugees and guerrillas.¹⁸⁸

Refugee policy toward Salvadorans located in Honduras eventually became another power struggle between the U.S. administration and religious agencies working with refugee camps there.¹⁸⁹ The AFSC, MCC, CWS, and CRS criticized U.S. strategy in the region. Trying to satisfy the refugee interests' and to protect them from attacks by the Salvadoran or Honduran military, the agencies workers in Honduras accompanied

¹⁸⁴ Ariye Neier, Americas Watch, to the Washington, DC, representative of Americas Watch, 10 September 1983, in: NSA, *El Salvador, 1977-1984*, doc. # 04239.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ "No Arms for El Salvador," *Christian Century* 346 (5 April 1989), 346. Likewise, the Salvadoran archdiocese refused U.S. government aid for its refugee camps.

¹⁸⁷ Cable from U.S. Embassy, Geneva to the Secretary of State, 1 June 1984, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 11007.

¹⁸⁸ Nichols, *Uneasy Alliance*, 121.

¹⁸⁹ Larry Minear, "The Other Missions of NGOs: Education and Advocacy," *World Development* 15 (Supplement 1987): 201-211; Nichols, *Uneasy Alliance*, chapter 8.

refugees in border-crossing attempts. They also lobbied against the Honduran government's decision (supported by the United States) to relocate refugee camps from the border to the interior of Honduras in the summer of 1981.¹⁹⁰ Throughout the 1980s, Salvadoran refugee communities in other Central American countries emerged as very active groups organizing themselves and their return home.¹⁹¹ Certain relief agencies' sympathies with the refugees' interests placed them at opposite ends with the Honduran, Salvadoran, and U.S. government. At various occasions, especially in the late 1980s, foreign church relief workers in El Salvador and Honduras, along with certain representatives of Salvadoran religious communities, remained targets of security forces given their refugee assisting and mediating role in conflicts between the government and the refugee communities.¹⁹²

In El Salvador, the CWS, MCC, CRS, Baptists, and Episcopal churches channeled money to Salvadoran religious refugee programs, not to the Salvadoran government's relief projects for the displaced.¹⁹³ In 1983, an article in *Reader's Digest* and a feature on CBS's *60 Minutes* alleged that NCC's funds were indeed channeled to guerrilla-linked groups.¹⁹⁴ Throughout the 1980s, similar charges were made against liberal church groups, which cooperated with ecumenical and Catholic relief

¹⁹⁰ The Salvadoran refugees were against the move away from the border. For a full account of the camps' relocation, the reaction of the refugee community, the governments, and the NGO community, see Nichols, *Uneasy Alliance*, chapter 8; Philip Wheaton, *Inside Honduras: Regional Conterinsurgency Base* (EPICA: Washington, 1982). Another insight account can be found in the papers of the World Council of Churches, Commission on Inter-Church Aid and Refugee World Service, Box 7, Folder: Central American Refugees 1980-1982.

¹⁹¹ See Frisk, "Displaced Persons;" Beth Cagan and Steve Cagan, *This Promised Land, El Salvador: The Refugee Community of Colomoncagua and their Return to Morazan* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

¹⁹² Memoranda and reports from field workers in El Salvador to their and fellow religious agencies in the United States highlight the worsening of the security of church workers engaging in relief work with local churches after 1987. Most religious workers who were targeted, were Salvadorans but there were a few U.S. citizens, e.g. the Central American regional director of the Jesuit Refugee Service, Richard Howard, who was detained and deported in July 1986 after accompanying 60 Salvadoran families on their journey home, a Maryknoll father who was denied residence status, and a Lutheran church worker. "Foreign Workers Face Problems in El Salvador," Information by Kathy DeRiemer to William Wipfler, NCC, 15 February 1988, and Letter by DeRiemer to Patricia Rumer, Office of Latin America, United Church Board for World Ministries, 10 December 1988, in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights office files, Folder: El Salvador 1988 (April 2000). Memorandum by Phil Anderson, LWS, El Salvador, to Lutheran World Federation, 9 August 1989, and Memorandum from Lutheran Office of Government Affairs, DC, to NCC, 9 August 1989, in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights office files, Folder: El Salvador 1989 (April 2000). See also Frisk, "Displaced Persons," 57-59; John Lindsay-Poland, "Unwelcome in El Salvador," *The Progressive* 53 (May 1989), 32-35; "Salvadoran Baptists," *Christian Century* 107:8 (7 March 1990), 42; "El Salvador's Beleaguered Lutheran Bishop," *Christian Century* 107:4 (31 January 1990), 93-96. Foreign church workers faced increasing difficulties with Salvadoran immigration authorities after the right-wing ARENA came to power by winning the parliamentary elections in 1988 and the presidential elections in 1989.

¹⁹³ Frisk, "Displaced Persons," 42-44.

¹⁹⁴ "National Council of Churches Under Sharpest Attack in History," *The Washington Post*, 26 January 1983, A25.

organizations in El Salvador.¹⁹⁵ In the later half of the 1980s, church agencies were accused of channeling aid to the FMLN.¹⁹⁶ At times, these kinds of accusations led to the detention, arrests, or threats of deportation for native and foreign church workers.¹⁹⁷ At other times, the Salvadoran military attacked church-run DP camps in El Salvador accusing them of collaboration with the FMLN.¹⁹⁸

Since 1980, certain religious NGOs started to reflect of their relationship with the U.S. government in regards to their link with the official foreign aid program.¹⁹⁹ Maryknoll requested a study from the Center of Concern to look into the possibilities and constraints of the funding relationship between the U.S. government and religious organizations.²⁰⁰ In a letter to Richard Neuhaus, the director of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Peter J. Dyck from the MCC illustrated the differing positions between his agency and the U.S. foreign policy toward El Salvador in the early 1980s: "The government is concerned with trade regulations, economic, self-image, political ideology, enforcement of policy and exercise of force; the values of the church, in viewpoint, and conduct, arise out of a totally different framework."²⁰¹ For the MCC, its work abroad is a "policy of principle...[that] is to be concerned with exploitation of the

¹⁹⁵ See e.g. Frisk, "Displaced Persons," 58. There was never substantial evidence proving a direct tie between the FMLN and church humanitarian funding.

¹⁹⁶ "Infiltration Charges Dividing Salvadoran Churches, State," *The Washington Post*, 6 August 1986, A17; "Prisoners in El Salvador Say Churches Aid Rebels," *The New York Times*, 3 August 1986, Sec.1:1, 12.

¹⁹⁷ "Infiltration Charges Dividing Salvadoran Churches, State," *The Washington Post*, 6 August 1986, A17.

¹⁹⁸ Peter O'Driscoll, "Letter from El Salvador," *America* 158 (16 April 1988), 401-405. O'Driscoll worked with the Jesuit Refugee Service in a camp endorsed by the Salvadoran Archdiocese. It was attacked in 1988.

¹⁹⁹ See Steve Askin, "U.S. Foreign Aid Plans 'Frighten' Some Religious Voluntary Groups," *National Catholic Reporter*, 22 January 1982; *Religious Private Voluntary Organizations and the Question of Government Funding: Preliminary Report* (Washington, DC: Center of Concern, June 1980) in: CCEIA, Box: 757, Folder: Funding Government grants and contracts with PVOs.

²⁰⁰ *Religious Private Voluntary Organizations and the Question of Government Funding: Preliminary Report* (Washington, DC: Center of Concern, June 1980) in: CCEIA, Box: 757, Folder: Funding Government grants and contracts with PVOs. Between 1975 and 1982, the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers had assigned a priest to assist Third World church workers in implementing mission projects, visit private voluntary agencies, and learn their priorities and interests. In regards to the relationship between the U.S. government and religious organizations, he concluded the following: "I have visited 200 American agencies and studied them closely. Most depend on the government for a portion of their funds. The staff of many agencies explained their aims in terms of their USAID grant: to identify Third World leaders, to organize workshops for leaders and American experts, and to establish networks wherein agency staff persons and project leaders can share information. It often occurred to me that some agencies are more concerned with survival and good rapport with the government than with the people they purport to serve. In seven years I have visited 13 countries and assisted 300 church leaders. Conversations on these visits convinced me that the Catholic Relief Services is more an arm of the U.S. government than an agency of the Catholic Church..." See "Statements on the Catholic Relief Services" compiled by George Cotter, Justice and Peace Office, 6 August 1982, in: CCEIA, Box 756, Folder: Key Documentation.

²⁰¹ Peter J. Dyck to Richard Neuhaus, 15 July 1981, in: CCEIA, Box: 758, Folder: PVO Religious Alphabetical.

powerless by the powerful, whether from the right or the left, and for whatever reason, and this is bound to lead to conflict with government."²⁰²

During 1980 and 1981, events concerning El Salvador framed much of the debate over U.S. policy toward Central America. After 1982, the U.S. administration and U.S. Congress increasingly turned their attention to Nicaragua. The March 1982 elections in El Salvador had appeased congressional skeptics and calmed the political debate in Washington. The most violent years of the Salvadoran civil war were over, although human rights violations, violence, and limited amounts of political freedom still existed on a large scale. The Salvadoran Catholic Church continued to document human rights violations but its earlier visionary role for social and political reforms was diminished by the civil war conditions. The most progressive and leading religious voices such as the Jesuits had gone into exile. The new Archbishop Rivera y Damas took a moderate position due to the dangerous conditions. He and most bishops increasingly condemned guerrilla violence. The Maryknoll society withdrew all its missionaries from El Salvador in the spring of 1981, but continued to report on the situation in the country. Two observers confirmed already in April 1981 that church people in El Salvador were increasingly disappointed with the escalation of the violence by the left.²⁰³ Questions of immediate aid, refugee relief and resettlement, and the political rapprochement of the Salvadoran government and the insurgents dominated the Salvadoran Catholic Church's and Protestant denominations' tasks in the later years of the 1980s.

El Salvador remained high on the foreign policy agenda of the liberal U.S. religious community, but aspects regarding the contra war in Nicaragua and the overall Central American DP and refugee situation partly substituted and partly accompanied the focus on El Salvador. What had started as an engagement for a de-escalation of the Salvadoran war, comprised various other Central American issues by 1983 and 1984. While the active religious groups and denominations had faced a political defeat in Washington (election but still military solution) in early 1982, their influence and leverage was much stronger in the U.S. society. The progressive missionaries' idea of combining religious principles with a reflection of the social and political situation and participatory processes was now also targeted at U.S. society. Some talked about a

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Letter and report to Maryknoll from Paul Newpower and Leo Sommer, 3 April 1981 regarding visit to El Salvador, 23-30 March 1981, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3.

"reverse mission." The strength of civic foreign policy toward El Salvador and other Central American countries in the 1980s was the high level of local, regional, and national organizing. We have seen that the dynamism of civic foreign policy regarding El Salvador in 1980 and 1981 comprised the national leadership. That is only half of its history. Engagement regarding Central America reached a similar climax at the grassroots level.

4.4 The Broadening of Civic Foreign Policy

The developments and changes in the religious community's involvement regarding U.S. policy toward Central America in the early 1980s are resembling the history of the Catholic and mainline Protestant engagement for Latin America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, at least structurally speaking. Then, new programs and interest groups embracing new visions were created. Together, they enhanced the revision in the Catholics' and mainline Protestants' Latin America programs. These changes were spurred by the emergence of a growing number of repressive states in South America. Unleashed by the Salvadoran civil war and U.S. foreign policy, a comparable evolution occurred in the years between 1980 and 1984, albeit larger in scale.

4.4.1 Grassroots Activism

The great majority of the hundreds of faith-based Central America task forces and interest groups that emerged in the 1980s were local or regional organizations. The grassroots character was also the main feature of the three largest Central America-oriented movements of the 1980s: the Sanctuary movement, Witness for Peace, and Pledge of Resistance.²⁰⁴ Although they expanded nationally, their origins are local and individual. Movement analysts have noted the difficulty in tracking down the precise institutional histories of the faith-based groups of the 1980s.²⁰⁵ While the histories of the

²⁰⁴ The highly diverse structure and interests demonstrate the difficulty of distinguishing clearly between interest groups and social movements in the Latin American human rights context. In order to come to terms with the diverse character, this study has used Keck and Sikkink's network model. When a number of groups rally around the same issue sociologists generally talk about a (social) movement. Issue areas that concern fundamental rights or crucial public goods generally account for the emergence of these social movements. Social science scholar Jack Walker identifies 20 percent of the U.S. interest group community as having arisen or belonging to social movements that sweep through the society from time to time. See Jack L. Walker, *Mobilizing Interest Groups in America: Patrons, Professions, and Social Movements* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 11-13.

²⁰⁵ See Gosse, "North American Front," 27; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*.

three largest movements have been chronicled, it is more arduous to reveal the major influential factors regarding the creation of each individual Central America group.²⁰⁶ Concerning their work and objectives, however, the local task forces were similar to the "movements," partly forming the latter and partly linked to the latter.

The Directory of Central America organizations from 1986 lists 1,061 Central America organizations throughout the United States. According to the Directory, 60 percent can be identified as local groups, 18 percent as regional and 22 percent as national ones.²⁰⁷ As in the case with the religious human rights network and religious denominations, the murders of church people and the refugee movement from El Salvador set in motion the first set of local groups and movements. The human rights director of the USCC, Bryan Hehir, explains the moral outrage that triggered the foreign policy activism of the Catholic laity involvement with the following words: "They may not know where El Salvador is but they know killing a bishop [or nuns] while he's saying mass is not something they ought to be passive about."²⁰⁸ The contra war against the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, supported and financed by the United States, generated a second wave of activism.

While some religious activists had neither previous experience relating to Central or Latin America nor a history in citizens' movement activism, many others who promoted Central America-related projects did. Some had been missionaries, some were linked to religious human rights networks; other activists were well-connected to the religious community in general or had a history of citizens' activism concerning international issues such as the Vietnam war, peace, the arms race, and nuclear policies. Secular Central America groups existed as well, most notably CISPES, among other leftist "solidarity groups."²⁰⁹ Although religious activists and groups interacted with the

²⁰⁶ In *Resisting Reagan*, Sociologist Christian Smith draws general conclusions about the very diverse and broad-based groups by providing an analysis of the three largest movements.

²⁰⁷ These numbers are from Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 387-392 who sampled data from the 1986 directory. The Directory from 1987 lists all organizations plus the Sanctuary groups but does not give specific data. See *Directory of Central American Organizations* (Austin, TX: Central American Resource Center, 1987).

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 149.

²⁰⁹ For further information regarding the history and policies of CISPES see Gosse, "North American Front" and Michael Little, *A War of Information: The Conflict Between Public and Private U.S. Foreign Policy on El Salvador, 1979-1992* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994). Gosse who was an activist himself gives an analysis with the perspective from the solidarity movement. Michael Little's study about the conflict between private and official policy toward El Salvador is a very harsh, if not biased, critique of leftist activism in the United States. While his study concentrates on an analysis of CISPES, he equates political opposition to U.S. foreign policy with an advocacy of revolutionary movements in El Salvador and fails to distinguish between the various wings and Central America movements. While the affinity between the FMLN and CISPES is a given, this cannot be maintained for

more secular "solidarity" groups and demonstrations or other forms of activism were partly organized jointly, their emergence, development, and policy objectives have to be seen separately from the faith-based activism of the 1980s.²¹⁰ In the following pages, I will recount a number of cases to illustrate the heterogeneous background history of the various religious-based El Salvador/Central America interest groups.

Of the three largest faith-based Central America movements and other citizens' action projects, the Sanctuary movement is the most unique in subject and strategy. Its agenda did not focus on general issues of the Salvadoran civil war, the Nicaraguan contra war, and United States involvement, but was first and foremost defined to helping civil war refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala. The vast majority of them had reached the United States as undocumented immigrants. The provision of sanctuary, i.e. church asylum, for people to whom the United States did not grant refugee status was the movement's main feature. Like other groups, it emerged and grew independently from national advocacy groups and leadership. The bold, unusual, and - according to United States law - illegal concept of sanctuary appeared to have a high mobilization capacity and accounts for its attraction among newcomers as well as religious movements' veterans. Later in chapter six, I will concentrate on the Sanctuary movement as one example of foreign policy activism at the grassroots and its meaning for civic foreign policy toward El Salvador.

The Sanctuary movement's sister grassroots initiatives concentrated on Central American war issues and U.S. intervention. Their engagement, however, also went beyond mere vocal policy protest and criticism. Witness for Peace, which was started in April 1983, activated approximately 4,500 people who traveled to the war zones of Nicaragua, talked to representatives from various social sectors and lived in homes of ordinary Nicaraguans. Some volunteers lived for eight months to two years in the war zones; others came with short-term delegations.²¹¹ The goal was to mobilize a citizen opposition against U.S. support for the contra-rebels by introducing them to first-hand knowledge about the subject. In addition, Witness for Peace members investigated and

many religious activists. According to Little, members of the Sanctuary movement were "brainwashed" when they were handed one-sided information from movement leaders.

²¹⁰ See Gosse, "North American Front." Smith narrates religious activists' observations about the secular wing of the Central America activism in the 1980s: *Resisting Reagan*, 329-336.

²¹¹ The history of Witness For Peace is detailed in Ed Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace: A Story of Resistance* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

documented the murder of civilians killed by the contras.²¹² Between November 1983 and 1987, 80,000 U.S. citizens signed the Pledge of Resistance displaying their personal opposition to a U.S. intervention and the militarization of foreign policy.²¹³ By pledging, the signers declared their civil disobedience toward federal institutions that were linked to policies in Central America, which, in the eyes of the pledgers, were partially contributing to the death and despair of Central Americans.²¹⁴ The three above-mentioned movements were the largest networks but not the only grassroots initiatives trying to link local groups and citizens across the country. The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, for instance, sought "to increase public awareness of the destructive role of the U.S. military and economic support for repressive forces in Central America" by targeting several cities and towns in one state (in this case Kansas) with a team of speakers (one Central American and one U.S. citizen) and information during the course of one week.²¹⁵ Similar Central America weeks and projects occurred with frequency.

In the case of the Witness for Peace, the Pledge of Resistance, and the Sanctuary movement, the initiative to organize around these specific issues had come from concerned individuals. While some had not had previous connections and experiences with Central or Latin America, the interest of others can be clearly traced back to missionary or Peace Corps activities or their ties to a religious group. While a former Maryknoll Sister initiated Witness for Peace, the Pledge for Resistance was the outcome of a gathering of fifty-three Christian peace and social justice activists, mostly movement leaders and representatives of peace organizations.²¹⁶ In 1982, Gail Phares, who had worked in Nicaragua as a Maryknoll nun in the 1960s, had created the Carolina Interfaith Task Force on Central America. By leading a group of church people to Nicaragua to see the situation for themselves, she sought to walk new paths to raise awareness about

²¹² Documentation of the effects of U.S. policy in Nicaragua can be found in *What We Have Seen and Heard in Nicaragua: Witness for Peace on the Scene Reports* (Witness for Peace Documentation Booklet 3, October 1986). See also Brett, "The Attempts," 778.

²¹³ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 60.

²¹⁴ Those who did not want to declare full civil disobedience could sign a Pledge of Support. It announces a similar opposition to the government's foreign policy but stays within the legal frame. See Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, for a detailed account of the two initiatives. Smith defines the three movements Sanctuary, Witness for Peace and Pledge of Resistance as separate but corresponding and mutually influencing entities. The text of the Pledge of Resistance (and the Pledge of Support) is documented in *Sojourners* 14:1 (January 1985), 8.

²¹⁵ Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (New York), "A Report on Central American Information Week conducted in Kansas and Western Missouri," (11-18 September 1983), in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights Office files, Folder: Central America/General/1982/1983 (April 2000).

²¹⁶ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 71, 78.

Central America. Accordingly, in April 1983 the first group of travelers – "ordinary, middle-class...churchgoers from North Carolina: eight pastors, a few academics, a housewife, one congressional aide, and a retired INS employee" - visited a village on the border to Honduras that had been attacked by contra forces.²¹⁷ In the aftermath of the trip, Phares and two other members of the first delegation to Nicaragua promoted and put together a nationwide project for similar trips.²¹⁸

In the following years, thousands of U.S. citizens from religious communities went to Nicaragua on similar trips where they would meet church people, Sandinistas, and opposition leaders and visit social projects to get informed about Nicaragua beyond reports in the U.S. media. In order to find sponsors, support organizations, and recruit and train delegates for the trips to Nicaragua, the original Witness for Peace organizers looked for help from national religious groups such as CALC, AFSC, and the Interreligious Task Force on El Salvador. Christian Smith reports that "Gail Phares contacted every religious and political connection she had from her previous work, asking them to join the trip, organize their state, donate money."²¹⁹ Due to her previous missionary experience as a Maryknoller she was also able to contact people from religious-based organizations in Nicaragua directly who helped her to arrange meetings with government and church leaders for the volunteers there.²²⁰

The Pledge of Resistance initiative combined national religious leaders and individual grassroots activists. While the first group announced its criticism of a potential U.S. invasion of Nicaragua in the progressive evangelical magazine *Sojourners* in December 1983 and August 1984, a like-minded initiative came from a graduate student of theology and the local American Friends Service Committee office in San Francisco.²²¹ Eventually, the two projects intertwined. The Pledge network comprised advisers and activists from Witness for Peace, *Sojourners*,²²² the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, WOLA, CISPES, and the anti-nuclear campaign SANE among others.

²¹⁷ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 26.

²¹⁸ Ibid, 29; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 73.

²¹⁹ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 73.

²²⁰ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 28.

²²¹ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 78-81.

²²² A small group of liberal evangelicals split from their conservative partners during the Vietnam War era. In questions of social justice, peace, and civil rights, this wing of evangelicals adheres to similar positions and values as its mainline Protestant counterparts while remaining conservative in its theological approach, i.e. the belief in the ultimate authority of the New Testament and a literal understanding of its meaning. Among these liberal evangelical groups are the Evangelicals for Social Action and the Sojourners community in Washington, D.C. The religious community publishes a magazine of the same name.

The Sanctuary movement emerged in an even more fragmented and decentralized scheme. The core of the movement was located in Tucson, where individual Quakers, Catholics, and mainline Protestants started the sanctuary concept in cooperation with the local and ecumenical Central America task force and a local immigration-rights organization, the Manzo Area Council. While Tucson eventually became the center of the movement (see chapter 5), Salvadoran refugee initiatives that were autonomous from the Tucson organizers had sprung up in California and Texas, states that were also affected by the new large-scale immigration from Central America. The earliest initiatives emanated in 1980 in the San Francisco area and in San Diego. Father Cuchulain Moriarty, a priest from the San Franciscan archdiocese, who had previous activism experience with issues regarding Chile, aided a group of Salvadoran migrants through the archdiocese' Commissions for Social Services and Social Justice.²²³ It was one of the first religious communities that endorsed the sanctuary concept of the religious activists in Tucson.²²⁴ Gustav Schultz, pastor of the University Lutheran Chapel in Berkeley, had formed a community network in the fall of 1981 called the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant Congregations. With a history of anti-Vietnam War activism, when Pastor Schultz had offered sanctuary to conscientious objectors, the community had practiced the concept of sanctuary for civil war refugees independently from the Tucson activists.²²⁵ In Los Angeles, the AFSC, and the local Interfaith Task Force chaired by a Maryknoller, and the immigration-rights group El Rescate, all in cooperation with the California Council of Churches (the regional equivalent to the NCC) worked with Salvadoran refugees.²²⁶ In San Diego, an Argentine priest working with the local detention centers provided help.²²⁷

The Central America movements were interwoven with other citizens' movements popular at the time, especially the nuclear freeze (SANE) and anti-arms race

²²³ Gosse, "North American Front," 27.

²²⁴ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 67.

²²⁵ Gustav Schultz in Gary MacEoin (ed.), *Sanctuary: A Resource Guide* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985), 79 and Ann Crittenden, *Sanctuary: A Story of American Conscience and Law in Collision* (NY: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), 69. Background information about the sanctuary community in Berkeley is in Susan Bibler Coutin, *The Culture of Protest: Religious Activism and the U.S. Sanctuary Movement* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1993). Later in 1988, Pastor Schultz also offered sanctuary to U.S. military personnel working in Central America. See memorandum by Gustav Schultz, 24 March 1988, in: NCC International Justice and Peace Office files, Latin America, Folder: Central America/United States Church Positions (April 2000).

²²⁶ Report by John Spain, attached to letter from Tom Marti to Dan Driscoll, 13 November 1981, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-85 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3. Spain suggested that the Maryknoll society should support the efforts by sending former and returning missionaries to volunteer as translators and otherwise.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

movements. Observers note that activists of the later campaigns were attracted to the Central America projects after their own campaigns had worn down.²²⁸ According to a statistic of prior social movement involvement, the majority of Sanctuary or Witness for Peace activists had primarily been engaged in anti-nuclear weapons work.²²⁹ All too often, the lines of activism were interactive and closely knit. A church community from New York City serves as a suitable example to illustrate the entwined group structure of civic foreign policy in the 1980s.

The ecumenical Riverside church community in New York City started a disarmament program in 1978.²³⁰ By 1982, a range of religious organizations, mostly peace-related like CALC, Fellowship for Reconciliation, Pax Christi, but also Sojourners, sponsored the project.²³¹ While interested in a broad range of peace and disarmament issues, the church and its program joined other groups in the 1980s in voicing protest against U.S. policies toward El Salvador, among other countries, through conferences, demonstrations, vigils, and information tours. It also became one of the two sanctuary churches of New York City.²³² Reverend William Sloane Coffin, who was the church's senior minister from the late 1970s until 1988 and the main initiator for the disarmament program, had established CALC in 1965 as a religious anti-Vietnam war activist. The disarmament program's director, Cora Weiss, had similar experiences in anti-Vietnam War activism and had been a consultant for Church World Service during the 1970s.²³³ The program's other director, Mike Clark, had previously worked with an NCC-related organization called Interfaith Task Force on Corporate Responsibility.²³⁴ Later, he became the director of Witness for Peace.²³⁵

The main supporting organizations for at least one of these peace-related Central America movements and projects were religious interest groups like the traditional pacifist organizations the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Clergy and

²²⁸ Gosse, "North American Front," 31; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 117-119.

²²⁹ Smith, *Resting Reagan*, 175.

²³⁰ Marjorie Keeler Horton, *The Disarmament Program of the Riverside Church: A History, 1978-1988* (Birmingham, AL: EBSCO, 1990). Ms. Horton was a member of the church and its program.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

²³² Personal interview with Cora Weiss, New York City, 17 March 1999. Regarding the distribution of declared sanctuary churches in the United States, see *Basta! National Newsletter of the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America* (October 1985), 21-24. Information regarding New York is on page 24.

²³³ Personal interview with Weiss. In the 1960s, Ms. Weiss was active with Women Strike for Peace.

²³⁴ Horton, *The Disarmament Program*.

²³⁵ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 75.

Laity Concerned (CALC), or the Fellowship for Reconciliation (FOR). Furthermore, Protestant denominations like the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the United Methodist Church, the Mennonite Church, the evangelical Sojourners, Catholic groups like Pax Christi or Maryknoll, as well as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference or the Washington Office on Latin America and many others gave public support.²³⁶

The great majority of Central America task forces were local, but three national networks need to be pointed out. Since 1980, Christian congregations and denominations, Catholic bishops, and leading religious activists endorsed and promoted a more forceful outreach into communities and individual churches to disseminate information about developments in El Salvador and encourage citizens' pressure on political representatives. In March 1980, briefly before Archbishop Romero's murder, Catholic activists established the Religious Task Force (RTF). Eventually, when the groups' focus shifted toward Nicaragua and Guatemala as well, the Religious Task Force became the Religious Task Force on Central America (RTF) in March 1982.²³⁷ Protestants from the mainline denominations created a very similar organization, the Inter-Religious Task Force on El Salvador (IRTF), after the murder of Oscar Romero. While the RTF was headquartered in Washington, DC, the IRTF's office was located in the National Council of Churches' main building in New York, close to the NCC's human rights office.

The historical roots of both organizations have to be seen in the context of the missionary and religious human rights network described in chapter three and four.²³⁸ Prominent initiators of the religious human rights network of the 1970s were part of the new El Salvador/Central American advocacy. The RTF's steering committee comprised a mix of members of Catholic orders such as Maryknoll or the Jesuits, members of nuns' and priests' special interest groups or umbrella organizations such as Network or the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.²³⁹ USCC's Tom Quigley was also a member.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 29, 46, 50. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 76f. lists all the organizations supporting Witness for Peace; page 401, footnote 10 refers to groups endorsing the Pledge for Resistance. For the sanctuary-supporting groups, see chapter 5.

²³⁷ "Religious Task Force on Central America: For Justice and Life," *Central America Report* 5:1 (February/March 1985), 7 in: CCEIA, BOX 766, Folder: Sanctuary.

²³⁸ The Religious Task Force's chairperson Marilyn Lorenz-Weinkaupf explains that "[w]e first came together after work experience in Latin America, gathering friends and other concerned persons of faith. Lived experience, religious-political awareness and concern for human rights first called us together in the mid-seventies. Initial work for Chile, Argentina, and then Peru developed into Central America work after 1978..." "Religious Task Force on Central America: For Justice and Life," *Central America Report* 5:1 (February/March 1985), 1 in: CCEIA, BOX 766, Folder: Sanctuary.

²³⁹ Newsletter, Religious Task Force, 12 March 1980, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 7: Csp./Rpts.: 1973-1985/Chile-El Salvador-Guatemala-Nicaragua-Peru-Venezuela, Folder 3.

NCC's human rights specialist William Wipfler had promoted the establishment of the Interreligious Task Force in New York.²⁴¹

The idea behind the Religious Task Force was to reach out to Catholic religious congregations and make them aware of the persecution of churches, Christian base communities, catechists, trade unionists, students and peasant organizations in El Salvador. In 1985, the RTF maintained "[i]ts common vision is that what the United States is doing in Central America is contemptible on moral grounds and on the grounds of our faith. It violates the image of God by destroying the lives of Central American people, and damages our won image as a society."²⁴² The Inter-Religious Task Force on El Salvador established a similar network within the mainline Protestant community.²⁴³ In 1982 alone, the IRTF called together three conferences under the roof of the National Religious Coordinating Committee to improve the communication and coordination in the religious community "seeking justice in Central America."²⁴⁴ The project was targeted at local groups and national NGOs aiming to synthesize and integrate the many grassroots, congressional, legal, and awareness actions.²⁴⁵ Both, the RTF and the IRTF lent their organizational support to the emerging faith-based movements. The national bureau of the various local Pledge for Resistance offices for example was set up in the IRTF office of the NCC in New York.²⁴⁶ Beverly Keene, a Presbyterian laywoman who was running the IRTF in New York, and Maryknoll Sister Peggy Healy of WOLA helped to handle the logistical tasks of the Witness for Peace project.²⁴⁷

Finally, the Central America Working Group of the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy needs to be mentioned. In the 1980s, it emerged from the Coalition's Human Rights Working Group that had emerged in the mid-1970s (see chapter 3.1.2).²⁴⁸ Accordingly, it represented a network of approximately 40, mainly national, religious

²⁴⁰ "Religious Task Force on Central America: For Justice and Life," *Central America Report* 5:1 (February/March 1985), 9 in: CCEIA, BOX 766, Folder: Sanctuary.

²⁴¹ Personal interview with Wipfler, 20 February 2000.

²⁴² "Religious Task Force on Central America: For Justice and Life," *Central America Report* 5:1 (February/March 1985), 7 in: CCEIA, BOX 766, Folder: Sanctuary.

²⁴³ The IRTF send out information packages with a list of the churches that had issued statements on Central America, a list of Central America organizations, refugee groups, with updates of legislative action, and information about demonstrations, literature etc. See: NCC International Justice and Human Rights Office files, Latin America, Folder: Latin America - General - 1982/1983.

²⁴⁴ Interreligious Task Force on El Salvador and Central America - Newsletter [no date] in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 7: Csp./Rpts. 1973-1985 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 4.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 81; Gosse, "North American Front," 33.

²⁴⁷ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 34; personal interview with Wipfler, 20 February 2000.

²⁴⁸ Van Gosse, "Active Engagement: The Legacy of Central America Solidarity," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 28:5 (March/April 1995), 22-29, 25.

organizations in 1983.²⁴⁹ What the RTF and the IRTF tried to accomplish on the community level, the Working Group attempted to do with members of the U.S. Congress. The former networks wanted to serve as interfaces with community and congregation members, while the latter Working Group, like WOLA, provided links with sympathetic Congress members.²⁵⁰ Due to the growing grassroots activism, the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy also started projects linking national lobbying campaigns with the local level by offering training seminars for peace advocacy.²⁵¹

The networking and cooperation-seeking process between religious activists and interest groups did not only take place within the United States. In previous chapters, we have observed the significance of a transnational religious identity among members of the U.S. Catholic Church and the Salvadoran Church. This feeling of sharing similar beliefs and purposes extended to members of the Protestant churches as well. While strong among missionaries, it also touched the hierarchies, most notably the Catholic ones, as reported in earlier pages, but also the mainline Protestant ones.

Since the foundation of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) in 1978/1982, CLAI and its U.S. counterpart, the NCC, had been seeking cooperation. In questions regarding the peace process in Central America the two organizations shared similar visions.²⁵² Protestant and Catholic churches and church organizations in Central America invited NCC members throughout the 1980s to visit their countries and talk with various sectors from their societies. In the late 1980s, CLAI and NCC sought a common approach for the Central American peace process.²⁵³ The NCC received numerous sources regarding human rights violations from CLAI members.²⁵⁴ At the grassroots level, conjoint statements of concern or accusatory letters to the U.S.

²⁴⁹ Review of the Coalition's work in 1983 in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 1: Misc.Csp. 1977-1985, Folder: Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy 1978-1985. The membership was not only religious-based. The Central America Working Group lives on in the Latin America Working Group with approximately 60 member organizations. The principal denominations and faith-based advocacy groups concerned about Central America in the 1980s are members. See <http://www.lawg.org> (February 2001).

²⁵⁰ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 227.

²⁵¹ A diverse group of religious group representatives attended the seminars. Among them, members of the United Church of Christ, the Southern Baptist Peacemakers, Network, UAHC, United Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, National Office of Jesuit Social Ministries, Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist Association, New Jewish Agenda, Church of the Brethren, Disciples of Christ. See review in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 1: Misc.Csp. 1977-1985, Folder: Coalition for New Foreign and Military Policy 1978-1985.

²⁵² Correspondence between Gerson Meyer, General Secretary of CLAI, and Oscar Bolioli, NCC, 4 May 1983; further correspondence between Felipe Adolf, General Secretary of CLAI, and Aire Brouwer, General Secretary of NCC, 8 December 1988, in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights Office files, Latin America, Folder: CLAI/Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias.

²⁵³ *Pastoral Solidaria* (February 1988), 23 in: NCC, International Justice and Human Rights Office files, Latin America, Folder: CLAI/Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias.

Presidents by members of Central American and U.S. religious communities continued into the 1980s.²⁵⁵ The established religious human rights network joined Guillermo Ungo, the President of the Salvadoran revolutionary opposition group FDR, and the Argentine human rights activist and Nobel peace laureate Adolfo Esquivel, in various "Interamerican" conferences and demonstrations to call for "an end of the war in El Salvador"²⁵⁶ or to "confront the forces of aggression with the moral forces of justice and peace."²⁵⁷

The 1980s revealed old and new structures and approaches of the United States peace movement. On the one hand, the "peace movement" of the 1980s²⁵⁸ was a perpetuation of the peace and protest movements of earlier decades. On the other hand, it revealed new aspects that need to be examined within the context of the time.²⁵⁹ Despite their autonomous individual histories, neither the Sanctuary movement nor the many Central America groups emerged in a vacuum. Faith-based grassroots action drew on religious institutions' resources and Latin America connections, and religious institutions' activities were enhanced and sanctioned by growing grassroots action. While citizens became organized around Central American issues such as peace, social justice, human rights, U.S. aid, and refugees, religious activist veterans presented foreign policy and Central America analyses at colleges, churches, in Congress, in religious and general-

²⁵⁴ Personal interview with Wipfler, 19 February 2000.

²⁵⁵ E.g. Letter by 800 members of Christian base communities and pastoral agents in Nicaragua including U.S. citizens, 27 March 1980, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, NSA, doc. # 00476. Christian Communities and religious leaders in Nicaragua, "A Message to the U.S. Congress and Churches about the coming vote for more aid to the contras," Managua, Nicaragua, 28 February 1986; "An Open Letter to President Reagan about 'those fellas who think it's all right to shoot 11-year-old-girls,'" signed by 105 Christians in Nicaragua, Managua, Nicaragua, 16 January 1986. Both letters by courtesy of Rev. Wipfler, private collection.

²⁵⁶ Continental Conference for Peace, Human Rights and Self-Determination for the People of El Salvador, Lima, 19-20 January 1982. Among the U.S. participants were Father Robert Drinan, Jesuit and ex-Congressman from Massachusetts, Thomas Quigley, USCC, and Joseph Eldridge, WOLA, in: LADOC 12:4 (March/April 1982), 1-4.

²⁵⁷ First Interamerican People's Dialogue on Central America, San Antonio, Texas, March 1984, in: *Christian Century* 101 (25 April 1984), 425. On Esquivel and U.S. participants, see: MSA, A10 OSC, El Salvador Martyrs, Box 7, Folder: Church Correspondence, Latin America.

²⁵⁸ The peace movement of the 1980s also includes the Nuclear Freeze -, the Citizen Diplomacy- and Sister City-movements. The following sociological studies treat the movements according to their different aspects: Smith, *Reagan*; Brett, "The Attempts;" Sam Marullo and John Lofland (eds.), *Peace Action in the Eighties: Social Science Perspectives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); John Lofland, *Polite Protesters: The American Peace Movement of the 1980s* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

²⁵⁹ This interpretation relies on Charles Chatfield's observation that U.S. peace movements should not be seen as separate entities but as continuous movements with new faces and agendas that return in waves: Chatfield, *Peace Movement*. It needs to be noted, however, that this kind of argumentation does not exclude each movement's particular origin and characteristic. The pluralism and fragmentation of the religious Central America activism in the 1980s is the best example.

interest journals.²⁶⁰ In fact, "El Salvador" energized several branches of religious groups' civic foreign policy - the humanitarian and advocacy work of religious institutions, direct grassroots activities, and border-crossing communication networks - and new faith-based actors.

According to the religious human rights campaign in the 1970s, national religious advocacy groups concentrated on lobbying campaigns in Congress. In 1980/1981 when El Salvador became a more contested policy issue in Washington, D.C., the religious human rights groups that had formed in the 1970s had not only a more sophisticated understanding of the lobbying process, but were also more commonly accepted in Washington's political scene.²⁶¹ Joseph Eldridge, WOLA's director, explained the political maturing of his organization in 1981 with the following words: "We have come a long way in seven years. We have learned to take experience and translate it into the language of diplomacy."²⁶² Whereas the established Washington groups were taking a more diplomatic form of activism according to the constraints of Washington's realistic pragmatism (of national representative politics), the new grassroots groups were more distant from institutional style politics and somewhat uncompromising.²⁶³ The next chapter will unveil these differences in style and objectives regarding the religious communities' refugee policy toward El Salvador.

As in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new wave of returning missionaries and concerned individuals and NGOs set up new schemes in which to work. Sisters, ministers, priests, and NGO volunteers were engaged on all levels of the religious human rights and Central America network: in the "movements," in local task forces, in the more traditional advocacy institutions in Washington, D.C.,²⁶⁴ and in projects attempting to link the various sectors. Alternative movements engaged in "direct action" at the grassroots level, abroad as well as at home.²⁶⁵ Members of these campaigns, however,

²⁶⁰ See especially articles in the following religious journals: *Christianity and Crisis*, *Christian Century*, *Catholic Worker*, *America*, *Cross Currents*, and *Maryknoll*. The speech itinerary of NCC's former human rights director, Rev. Wipfler, concerning issues of human rights, U.S. foreign policy, and social justice in Latin America throughout the 1970s and especially in the 1980s is not only impressive. It gives an idea of the widespread outreach of religious activists at the time. See William Wipfler's CV, by courtesy of Rev. Wipfler.

²⁶¹ See Chapter 3.

²⁶² Quoted in Barbara Crossette, "Groups Trying to Sway Latin America Policy," *The New York Times*, 18 November 1981, A24.

²⁶³ See Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 227-229. See also chapter 5 regarding the different approaches of civil war refugee-supporting groups.

²⁶⁴ Like WOLA or Network.

²⁶⁵ Barbara Epstein, "The Politics of Moral Witness: Religion and Nonviolent Direct Action," in Sam Marullo and John Lofland (eds.), *Peace Action in the Eighties: Social Science Perspectives* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 106-124, 106.

also sought to influence their political representatives through letter campaigns, vigils in front of district offices and in Washington, D.C., even through acts of civil disobedience.²⁶⁶ Whereas the religious-based engagement for human rights, peace, and refugees in regards to Central America was the most critical element of civic foreign policy in the 1980s, Catholic sisters, especially those with missionary experience, were among the most active and forthright in organizing around Central American issues.²⁶⁷ One activist explains that "the majority of participants were men, [but] most of the leaders were women."²⁶⁸

One can conclude that the Central America peace movement was a patchwork of individual campaigns whose main base rested in Catholic, Protestant, Unitarian Universalist, Jewish, and peace churches and organizations.²⁶⁹ If fragmentation, institutional pluralism, and grassroots activism characterize the Central America-related religious network of the 1980s, what were the (common) motives and interests that united this loose and heterogeneous web of groups in their actions?

4.4.2 The Civic Culture of Faith-Based Foreign Policy Activism

According to one Witness for Peace activist, families and friends often considered his fellow "peace travelers" and him "crazy." He further notes, "[s]ocial activism was a dirty word in many social strata, akin to unpatriotic behavior."²⁷⁰ Considering the size and diversity of the U.S. religious community, the active denominations, religious groups, and individuals represented only a small faction of the religious family. Despite the heterogeneity, all groups and participants belonging to this faction assertively and emphatically targeted those U.S. foreign and military policies that

²⁶⁶ Regarding Witness for Peace's legislative lobbying campaigns see Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 170-182, esp. 174f.

²⁶⁷ Margaret Swedish, "The Religious Roots of Solidarity" (April 1994), on <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/mags/cross/40/40salv/swedish.html> (5 April 1999). Ms. Swedish was the RTF's chairwoman at the time. See also Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 150. Together with churchwomen from other denominations, Catholic sisters staged visible campaigns such as a peace pilgrimage to Honduras where they wanted to pray for peace in Central America at the U.S. air and naval bases as well as at cathedrals. *Christian Century* 101 (4-11 January 1984), 9; "Honduras Denies 150 Religious Women Visit," *National Catholic Reporter*, 16 December 1983. At other times, they entered unlawfully the Rotunda of the Capitol to announce their protest to the U.S. policy toward El Salvador. See press release of the Catholic nuns, 2 December 1982, in: MSA, A10 OSC, El Salvador Martyrs, Box 7: Solidarity/Information Publications, Folder: Various Sources, 1980-1984. Catholic women were among the Sanctuary activists and among those that responded first to the call to accompany Salvadoran refugees in Honduras to their home country. For the latter issues, see chapter 5.

²⁶⁸ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 34.

²⁶⁹ Its main base was Christian but individual activists and groups from the Jewish community joined.

they perceived to be antithetic to U.S. values and interests, most notably the U.S. alliance with or support for non- or semi-democratic regimes or groups such as the South African apartheid regime, the Nicaraguan contra rebel forces, or the Salvadoran government. Because the Central America-related activism united various religious groups with quite different objectives and interests, we should look closer into the motivation and civic culture of this kind of faith-based activism. Whereas political opponents have labeled certain activists as "Communist" or "Marxist," scholars have provided various definitions such as "religious new left," "liberal internationalists" or, characterizing only one wing, "radical internationalists."²⁷¹

Critical observers have stressed the selective and one-sided list of international topics of the religious activists. They note that the criticism was primarily directed towards the United States and its allies. Pleas from victims of Soviet aggression, as in the case of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, therefore, fell on deaf ears within the liberal groups. According to the interpretation of these observers, this type of civic foreign policy only concentrated on the negative angles of the Western industrialized world and the capitalist system in general and on the United States in particular.²⁷²

The reasons for the "selective" foreign policy agenda go beyond ideological reasoning of the "second" Cold War of the 1980s, at least regarding the Latin America activity of the Catholic Church, Catholic female and male orders, and many Protestant and peace church groups. As seen in previous chapters, the historical roots of U.S. Catholic and Protestant activism reach further back than the seemingly sudden preoccupation with Central America in the 1980s. While antipathy to the "Ronald Reagan type of foreign policy" was widespread and the more radical groups condemned the so-called U.S. imperialism,²⁷³ the emotional attachment of many participants to issues of human rights and peace in Latin America grew out of very specific church- and organization-related histories and experiences.²⁷⁴ In 1979, a Maryknoll priest responds to Michael Novak's critique of the "Marxist" inclination of the order. The priest affirmed that Maryknoll's standpoints are only related to the countries in which they operate and

²⁷⁰ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 33.

²⁷¹ See page 214f.

²⁷² For Hollander and Lewy, ideology is responsible for the selective foreign policy agenda. Both authors criticize this type of civic foreign policy because it is detached from the humanitarian goals of the religious groups: Hollander, *Anti-Americanism*, 83; Lewy, *Peace and Revolution*, 236.

²⁷³ A radical leftwing Catholic activist emphasizes that "U.S. imperialism" is a main element in the criticism of the religious left. See Kathleen Schultz, "An Analysis of the Christian Left in the United States," *Monthly Review* 36:3 (July/August 1984): 56-71, 59-61.

²⁷⁴ Livezey, "US Religious," 72.

"in which United States governmental and corporate influences are strong."²⁷⁵ Without the local presence, insight and affection were much harder to come by. The pre-1980 religious groups' Latin America-related engagement for social justice and human rights was the ground on which much of the national leaderships' and interest groups' action in the 1980s was able to bloom. When "Central America" also became a preoccupation of the late Carter and Reagan administrations, religious activists encountered new ground for disagreement and shifted much of their attention to U.S. policies.

One of the harshest criticisms regarding the foreign policy objectives of the "liberal" religious groups came from the religious community itself. Attacks on the National Council of Churches and its development, refugee, and relief agency, CWS, and the Maryknoll order were frequent in the early 1980s. They came particularly from the conservative think-tank Institute on Religion and Democracy comprising religious thinkers such as Michael Novak and Richard Neuhaus. They accused the NCC particularly of financing humanitarian programs that support "Marxist-Leninist governments," revolutionary guerrillas, and anti-American organizations.²⁷⁶

The Ecumenical Program for Interamerican Cooperation and Action (EPICA), born in the reformist atmosphere of the 1960s, was partially funded by the NCC. It was also one of the religious interest groups with a more radical inclination.²⁷⁷ The NCC's and EPICA's position on Central America issues were related, yet as an umbrella organization that represents the whole range of U.S. mainline Protestantism and that jointly engaged in relief and development work with the U.S. government, labeling the NCC "anti-American" or "pro-Communist" was far-fetched.²⁷⁸ Like WOLA, EPICA had already issued very critical analyses of the late Carter administration's economic and

²⁷⁵ Letter by Robert Carleton, Maryknoll, to Michael Novak, 28 November 1979, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 5: Misc.Csp/Rpts. 1977-1985, Folder 13/Michael Novak Case.

²⁷⁶ Paul Taylor, "National Council of Churches Under Sharpest Attack in History," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1983, A25; "New Clergy Group Assails Church Aid Leftists," *The New York Times*, 16 February 1983, B9.

²⁷⁷ Taylor, "National Council of Churches," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1983, A25. While EPICA used more forthright language, the goal of moralizing foreign policy is the same.

²⁷⁸ See the attacks by the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Taylor, "National Council of Churches," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1983, A25. The NCC openly criticized U.S. support for dictatorial regimes such as the Somoza government in Nicaragua and the human rights violations by U.S. supported regimes such as the Salvadoran government. In its 1978 Resolution on Nicaragua, it states that "[a]rmed with U.S. and Israeli arms and trained over the years by the U.S. military, the National Guard troops have regularly attacked the large anti-government demonstrations that occurred with increasing frequency..." The NCC stresses that the "recently created Latin America Council of Churches...called for the immediate resignation of President Anastasio Somoza." Apart from assisting refugees, the NCC had called for the suspension of all military and economic assistance to Somoza government, the withdrawal from participation in any international mediation effort unless all major Nicaraguan political groups are represented, the suspension of all arms sales and military assistance from other countries, the assistance of

military strategy in El Salvador accusing the administration of painting a picture that did not reflect the Salvadoran reality.²⁷⁹ In one report, EPICA's characterized President Carter's El Salvador policy after the 1979 coup as: "The immorality of a U.S. policy which involves a systematic program of reform through repression boggles the imagination. The assumption that any government can repress its people and then offer them a couple of superficial reforms as recompense is such a moral and political contradiction that one wonders at the sanity of its conceivers even more than at its executioners."²⁸⁰ EPICA's language was straightforward. It opposed "interventionist" policies of the U.S. government in Central America. It questioned policies; it did not call for an overthrow of the U.S. political system. The Institute on Religion and Democracy's criticism demonstrated a disagreement of two opposing visions of civic foreign policy toward El Salvador within the religious sector of the United States. The structural difference was the Institute on Religion and Democracy's close link to the Reagan administration.²⁸¹

U.S. American religion has undergone a deep dividing change since the early 1970s. Despite its heterogeneity, American religion had been characterized by a cultural consensus that Will Herberg has portrayed in his famous *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology* in 1955. Since the 1970s, scholars have identified the development of U.S. religion as an era of polarization between individual denominations. The growing liberal political inclination within the main denominations - Catholicism and mainline Protestantism - was accompanied by a conservative and fundamentalist approach of other Christian groups.²⁸² While the emergence of the active Religious Right in the late 1970s - Moral Majority, Inc. or the spectacular performances

Nicaraguan refugees by UNHCR, and expresses solidarity with people of Nicaragua "in their struggle for peace and justice." The NCC's position on El Salvador was similar to the Nicaraguan one.

²⁷⁹ In March 1980, the U.S. Department of State filed reports by two Salvadoran, Socorro Jurídico and FDR, and two U.S. NGOs, WOLA and EPICA, depicting them as "anti-imperialist" and "anti-interventionist." See NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 00476.

²⁸⁰ In MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 7: Csp./Rpts.: 1973-85 Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela, Folder 3.

²⁸¹ One of the Institute's founders, Michael Novak, had been approached by the administration to become Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, after Ernest Lefever's nomination was rejected in early 1981. Novak rejected the offer. But he was appointed as chief of the U.S. delegation to the UNHCR in Geneva. In its public diplomacy campaign, the Reagan administration also relied on members of the Institute. See Confidential memorandum from Robert Kagan, ARA, to Walt Raymond, National Security Council, regarding Public Diplomacy Plan for Explaining U.S. Central America Policy to the U.S. Religious Community, 18 September 1986, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1978-1990*, doc. # 02880.

²⁸² See e.g. Wuthnow, *The Restructuring*, 172.

of televangelists like Jim Bakker and Jerry Falwell - received much attention, sympathizers noted a "religious revival of the left".²⁸³

Neutral commentators also started to define that sector of the religious community that engaged in nonviolent action projects and public criticism of the excesses of U.S. militarism as "Religious New Left."²⁸⁴ The opposing visions regarding U.S. policies in Central America of the Institute on Religion and Democracy or the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) on the one side, and the NCC or the Catholic Church, on the other, reflected this polarization of the religious community in questions of foreign policy. While the NCC, the Catholic Church, or a group such as EPICA identified issues of poverty and the excesses of U.S. military power or the consequences of U.S. economic policy as the main source for conflict and violence, a group such as the Institute on Religion and Democracy saw Communist and Marxist forces as the main threat to freedom and democracy.²⁸⁵

In studies about earlier U.S. peace movements, the foreign policy views of the liberal wing of the U.S. religious community have been characterized as "liberal internationalism" or "idealistic-humanitarian pacifism," depending on the particular wing.²⁸⁶ Within the liberal wing, there are currents that cannot be easily distinguished from each other. A small part belongs to the "radical reformists," but the much larger part is "mainstream liberals."²⁸⁷ Political scientist Lars Schoultz questions the self-claimed radicalism of some activists. He does not perceive radicalism in their viewpoints because they stop short of calling for a transformation of the U.S. political system. According to Schoultz, their main demand is a transformation of U.S. foreign policy toward the Third World. Furthermore, the large majority of lobbyists seem to accept the traditional rules of the political system.²⁸⁸ Scholars of the U.S. peace movement such as Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield group the religious sector of the anti-war and peace movements into radical and liberal pacifists.²⁸⁹ While radical forces seek to detect

²⁸³ Michael Ferber, "Religious Revival On the Left," *The Nation* (July 6/13, 1985), 913. One activist of the Christian "left" maintains that "[p]erhaps no change in the U.S. landscape is as notable over a 20-year horizon as what has occurred in the role of the Christian sector in the movements and processes of social change." See Schultz, "An Analysis," 56.

²⁸⁴ Reichley, *Religion*, 256; Hollander, *Anti-Americanism*, 81; Epstein, "The Politics of Moral Witness," 106ff; Endy, "War and Peace," 1426f.

²⁸⁵ See e.g. Carol Griffith (ed.), *Christianity and Politics: Catholic and Protestant Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1981), which includes articles by the Institute's main co-founders and members of the Board of Directors James Schall, Richard Neuhaus and Michael Novak.

²⁸⁶ Earl Brill, "Religious Influences on United States Foreign Policy" in Michael P. Hamilton (ed.), *American Character and Foreign Policy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 60-66.

²⁸⁷ Schoultz, *Human Rights*, 89.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁹ DeBenedetti, "Peace Activism," 224.

and uncover the connections between social problems in the United States and, for example, the Vietnam War, liberals rather concentrate on the discourse of war and peace. While radicals seek confrontation, liberals emphasize the political compromise and seek to cooperate with the political center.²⁹⁰

In traditional pacifist groups such as the AFSC one can find radical as well as liberal pacifists. In a large and hierarchical church institution such as the Catholic Church, just-war theorists, liberals, and conservative forces exist in parallel. This feature demonstrates the limitations of a precise group identification and definition. The strong participation of the U.S. Catholic Church and other mainstream religious actors and the "moderate" criticism within some of these groups shows that the Central America activism united a very heterogeneous religious sector of which only a small faction can be labeled as "radical reformist." The "political" grouping cuts through the various denominations and organizations. While different in particular understandings and objectives, the various participants agreed on the priority of social justice and political equity and the "immorality" of U.S. military means.

Church groups also expressed anger and frustration about the course of events in accusing tones, but they remained largely moderate in voicing their opposition to U.S. policy toward El Salvador.²⁹¹ The moderate tone and their middle-of-the-road policy suggestions distinguishes the denominations and religious human rights network from the more radical Central American groups that were founded in the wake of the Nicaraguan rebellion after 1978.²⁹² A number of activists have labeled their work "solidarity."²⁹³ It is difficult, however, to draw clear lines between these so-called "solidarity organizations," religious grassroots groups, and ecumenical advocacy groups.

²⁹⁰ Chatfield, *Peace Movement*, 144.

²⁹¹ Jim Wallis, editor of the evangelical magazine *Sojourners* writes in an open letter to President Reagan in April 1982 that the "sadistic and demonic violence" that effects non-combatants and people not guilty of guerrilla violence is carried out by forces supported with U.S. military aid and political leverage. *Sojourners* 11:4 (April 1982), 3. In an interview with the Christianity Today Institute, Wallis explains his "objection to the American system of wealth and power" by pointing to his religious beliefs and rejecting a Marxist inclination. He clarifies this position by referring to his "pro-life" attitude that reaches beyond the domestic spectrum. He criticizes the Left for not caring about the unborn and the Right for not caring about the impoverished such as a peasant in Central America. The interview is published in *Christian Thought and Action* (Christianity Today Institute, 1985), 27 in: CCEIA, Box 765, Folder: Foreign Aid.

²⁹² For an assessment of the "solidarity movement" see Gosse, "North American Front"; Gosse, "Active engagement."

²⁹³ Judging from activists' accounts, it remains unclear which group belonged to the solidarity category. Solidarity seems to be a concept fit to the activists' own history and ultimate goals and interests. Gosse distinguishes between solidarity and anti-interventionist groups. He does not group Sanctuary with the solidarity movement. Phillip Wheaton, however, who was not only one of the religious human rights activist veterans from the 1960s but also one of the leading Sanctuary activists in Washington, D.C., understands Sanctuary as a way that brought U.S. citizens closer to "inter-American solidarity." Personal interview with Phillip Wheaton, 6 April 1999. Others in the Sanctuary movement seemed to refrain from

Among the radical voices were secular as well as religious-based activists. In regards to El Salvador, the most significant and largest solidarity organization was the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). Founded in October 1980, it was also galvanized by Archbishop Romero's murder. It came to serve as an organizational center for leftwing and anti-imperialist policy advocacy in the United States. A declaration from its founding conference in October 1980 sheds light on the more radical inclinations of CISPES. It repudiates U.S. imperialist intervention, condemns "the genocidal war...and recognizes the just war of legitimate defense," i.e. the military arm of the opposition, the FMLN.²⁹⁴ CISPES and other solidarity organizations were largely secular groups but included religious activists in their membership. As mentioned above, the religious and the secular network were not necessarily two different entities. The more radical groups among the religious human rights and Central America network, like Maryknoll or EPICA, played an organizational role or endorsed "solidarity work." This was the case in early work relating to Nicaragua in 1978 as well as El Salvador activism in the 1980s.²⁹⁵ Despite such linkages, the majority of faith-based groups, activists, and the human rights network in Washington should be analyzed independently from secular groups. In order to understand the different foreign policy objectives of faith-based activism, this is essential.

Van Gosse, scholar and solidarity activist, tries to capture the main differences by grouping the forces into a "solidarity" and an "anti-intervention" faction.²⁹⁶ According to him, the latter faction comprised mainly the Washington-based ecumenical advocacy groups such as WOLA and the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, which focused on terminating military aid to El Salvador.²⁹⁷ The idea of "anti-intervention" was not the sole interest of their platform. Motivations and convictions that were driving their foreign policy objectives were based on a set of principles reflecting religious beliefs and U.S. values.²⁹⁸ What is more, both the religious groups' "radical" as well as "liberal" wing, have articulated these principles.

using the term solidarity. Margaret Swedish of the RTF talks specifically about "faith-based solidarity" to separate the faith-motivated activists from secular ones.

²⁹⁴ Quoted in Gosse, "The North American Front," 45f., footnote 15.

²⁹⁵ Gosse, "The North American Front," 20. Gosse explains the early roots of solidarity work as reaching back to the various small Latin America groups emerging in the 1970s such as North Americans for Human Rights in Argentina, Venceremos Brigade, National Network in Solidarity with the Salvadoran People etc. See also "Religious Task Force on Central America: For Justice and Life," *Central America Report* 5:1 (February/March 1985): in: CCEIA, BOX 766, Folder: Sanctuary.

²⁹⁶ Gosse, "North American Front," 26.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Sociological analyses stress external social structures as well as normative commitments and interests as guidelines of human behavior and actions. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 384.

Whether Christian, moral, or ideological-political philosophies prevailed over their foreign policy principles, religious groups' and leaders believed firmly in their right to enter the public discourse and criticize the foreign policy means and objectives they thought counterproductive for the good of the United States as well as other societies.²⁹⁹ The Presbyterian Church epitomized the belief in civic possibilities and duties in the following statement: "Besides continuing in prayer for those Central American sisters and brothers who are seeking to create a better life for the poor, what we most have to offer them is informed citizenship here at home...Ours is a land in which informed public opinion can make an impact on the way elected officials vote, and we are grateful for that while we admit to being careless of it."³⁰⁰ The domestic missionary impulse was also expressed in mainline Protestants' guidelines on missionary involvement in social justice and human rights issues:

The Christian missionary is a citizen of the world, but as a citizen of the United States one has not only rights but also opportunities and responsibilities because of that very citizenship...the missionary should be involved in education and action in relation to the effects of United States policy and presence overseas. To do so, will not only serve the needs of people overseas but would be a concomitant service to the United States citizenry in light of the Gospel, because the same influence also affect the American people, either directly or indirectly.³⁰¹

The transnational religious identity furthered civic activism at home. The political scientist James Rosenau explains how transnational religious actors reconstruct their transnational roles into demands as citizens of their country:

Their ["activists who seek to promote greater citizen involvement in public and world affairs"] efforts to associate loyalty with greater involvement spring not from a conviction that people would feel better about themselves as citizens if they were more informed about the course of events. Rather they seek to elevate the level of public information because they assume that the processes of intended and unintended aggregation would then result in sounder public policies and more desirable macro structures.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ The Catholic bishops noted: "The USCC...believes it is significant to note that a congruence exists between the theological argument which moves the bishops to address these public issues and the constitutional rights accorded them in the American political system. It is a right rooted in our constitutional consensus which affirms the validity and value of religious and moral perspectives in the determination of public policy." Statement of Bryan Hehir, USCC, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Certification Concerning Military Aid to El Salvador*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 8 February, 11 March 1982, 205. Maryknoll Sister Melinda Roper emphasized that: "We, the public, have the more awesome responsibility to encourage and critique..." in: Speech at the University of Notre Dame, 5 October 1981, "Today's Peacemaker," in: MSA, Melinda Roper Talks, Box: S 1.5, Folder 3: July-December 1981.

³⁰⁰ Report of the Central American Task Force of the Presbyterian Church, 6 January 1983, in: *Church and Society* 73 (March/April 1983), 7-20, 14f.

³⁰¹ Committee for East Asia and the Pacific, Division of Overseas Ministries of the NCC, "The Development of Guidelines on Missionary Involvement in Social-Justice and Human Rights Issues" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 6:1 (January 1982): 9-12, 10.

The religious community sought to alert the U.S. public and policymakers in Washington to the human rights violations of the Salvadoran security forces which the Reagan administrations partially denied and partially downgraded. While individual activists justified the use of violence by the guerrilla groups, the majority of the religious interest groups and activists did not. The Catholic Church and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), for example, condemned violence on both sides of the political spectrum.³⁰³ The majority, however, wanted to counterbalance the information regarding El Salvador handed out by the U.S. administration. It was the one-sidedness of the reports from the White House and the State Department and the ignorance, downsizing, and/or denial of the massive human rights violations committed by the Salvadoran security forces that drew the attention of the religious groups. Especially in the early 1980s, the religious human rights community and the Reagan administration contested each other's information and interpretation of human rights violation and acts of aggression in El Salvador.

The massacre of El Mozote on 10 and 11 December 1981 revealed the dividing lines in the battle of information between the U.S. administration and religious interest groups. The infamous massacre of over 750 peasants, including women and children, by members of the Salvadoran army is a recognized historical truth today but it was not accepted as such at the time.³⁰⁴ Accumulating its data and knowledge from the Salvadoran government and the army, which rejected the possibility of such violence in its midst, the U.S. State Department denied the incident and declared it guerrilla propaganda.³⁰⁵ The first news of the massacre reached the United States and the international community with the publication of two newspaper articles in late January 1982. Two U.S. journalists of the New York Times and the Washington Post had traveled to the site of the massacre in early January 1982 guided by guerrillas. Their reports soon became part of the war on information. It was the transnational religious communication network that brought the likeliness of the massacre to the attention of the

³⁰² James N. Rosenau, *The Study of Global Interdependence: Essays on the Transnationalisation of World Affairs* (London: Frances Pinter, 1980), 105.

³⁰³ Regarding statement of UAHC, see Resolution on El Salvador, 38 December 1981, in: *Peacemaking*, 28.

³⁰⁴ Mark Danner reconstructs and documents the events of "El Mozote" in great detail in his *The Massacre at El Mozote* (New York: Vintage, 1993). Another document can be found in Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 155-165. Tutela Legal, the Salvadoran archbishopric's human rights organization, published the first detailed account including a list of the people who died, in November 1991 under the title *Investigación de la Masacre de El Mozote y Lugares Aledaños*. The exhumation of remains occurred at the end of 1992.

³⁰⁵ The Salvadoran government denied the massacre and did not initiate an investigation. See Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 155.

U.S. media. Reverend Wipfler of the NCC had received notice from a staff member of Socorro Jurídico in mid-December 1981, a few days after the incident occurred. He channeled his information to the New York Times reporter, Amnesty International, and sent a letter to the State Department with his information, requesting further insight into the incident.³⁰⁶ Despite the reporters' eyewitness account, the U.S. administration downgraded the significance of the massacre, which would have illuminated the devastating human rights record of the Salvadoran security forces.

In order to understand the reaction of the administration and the insistence of the religious community on shedding light on the event, one has to take into account the time when the news was revealed. The newspaper reports were published a day before President Reagan issued his first certification on the improvement of the human rights record of the Salvadoran government. The administration needed congressional approval for its budget plans, including the increase in military and economic assistance for El Salvador. At the same time, the religious network was highly aware of the importance of the congressional hearings for its interest in cutting military aid and settling for a political negotiated solution for the conflict in El Salvador.

The outrage was fueled by the fact that the United States was training or had partly trained Salvadoran officers and troops who were engaged in acts of violence. The massacre at El Mozote for example was committed by members of the Atlacatl brigade, a U.S. trained army battalion.³⁰⁷ Because the Catholic Church and Protestant groups had established and deepened their relationship with societal sectors in Central America in the previous decade, they did not accept the Reagan administration's interpretation of "communist interference" as the major source of instability in El Salvador.³⁰⁸

As seen in chapter 4.3, missionary and religious activists' reports in 1980 and afterwards emphasized the U.S. government's direct and indirect role in violence. The private and socio-religious border-crossing experiences galvanized the entrance of individual activists when they perceived their government as not only misrepresenting the political situation and ignoring human rights violations, but increasing the suffering of human life. First, U.S. missionaries reported about human suffering as inflicted by U.S.-financed security forces. Later, the increase of Central America trips by members

³⁰⁶ Information based on personal interview with William Wipfler, 28 March 1999 and Danner, *The Massacre*.

³⁰⁷ Atlacatl was the Salvadoran army's first anti-insurgency unit that had finished its training under supervision of U.S. military advisers at the beginning of 1981. See Informe de la Comisión de la Verdad 1992-1993, *De la locura a la esperanza*, 157.

from grassroots projects and by members of the well-established religious interest groups generated similar impressions of "people...dying of...bullets, most of which are provided by or are able to be bought because of U.S. assistance."³⁰⁹ Therefore, all the groups - whether the advocacy groups in Washington like WOLA, or the Protestant denominations, the Catholic Church and its orders, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and the task forces - sought to stress the greater amount of human rights violations of those forces whom the United States gave its support. In presenting their arguments, the majority of religious groups believed the actions of their government to be immoral according to their religious beliefs of the individual's worth and antithetical to their understanding of U.S. values and democracy.

Moral persuasion is one of the main political assets of religious groups as players in politics. The integration of moral aspects was a fundamental motive and goal of the groups' aspirations. It was the foreign policy means that provoked the interest and violated the belief systems of the activists: the support of an authoritarian regime that persecuted members and groups of its society, that violated human rights or looked aside when members of the government itself were linked to them, that limited fundamental aspects of a democratic society like freedom of expression and rule of law, and finally the direct U.S. intervention in a foreign civil war through massive military and economic aid that made human rights violations and human suffering possible:

It is morally repugnant for the government of El Salvador to engage in systematic brutality against its own people, it is surely morally repugnant for the United States to assist in such brutality. Here moral considerations must outweigh all other types of considerations...³¹⁰

Moral norms, however, were blended with civic principles stemming from U.S. tradition.

The State Department under President Reagan argued that one of the elements that would hold together the diverse coalition of special interest groups planning a demonstration against U.S. policy in El Salvador in May 1981 was its "radical opposition

³⁰⁸ This does not mean that they denied communist interference. Explanation for emergence differed from Reagan administration. WOLA, Maryknoll, and the bishops all rejected Soviet influence.

³⁰⁹ Mary Solberg, Luthern Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), "Reflections on a Journey through Central America," (5 November 1982), in: CCEIA, Box 773, Folder: Central America-Academic/Legal Analysis. See also among other reports, David Kalke, "Central America's Refugees: A Litany of Suffering," *Christian Century* 99 (10 November 1982), 1136-1139. Mr. Kalke is a pastor of the Lutheran Church in America. Before his report, he had visited refugee camps in Honduras as part of a delegation by the AFSC.

³¹⁰ Statement by twelve Protestant church leaders, 28 February 1984, in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Foreign Assistance and Related Programs, 98th Cong., 2nd sess., 20 March 1984, 968-970, 969.

to the prevailing values of American society.³¹¹ The demonstration of approximately 25,000 people drew the largest number of antiwar protesters since the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations in the early 1970s.³¹² While the State Department concentrated on the more radical groups in its analysis, the demonstration attracted groups as diverse as SANE, FOR, AFSC, the National Black United Front, and Trotskyites.³¹³ In fact, there had been a debate among the many groups preceding the demonstrations, and peace and faith-based groups on the one hand and more radical secular groups on the other had formed separate steering committees.³¹⁴ A closer analysis of the religious groups who were part of the network of groups in the following years shows a different picture from that painted by the administration. It reveals an affinity to a certain set of U.S. ideals. The Catholic bishops e.g. placed their own convictions in the context of the U.S. national interest in 1982:

As Americans, we want to see our vital national interests protected and our government's policies reflect our national values and ideals. As citizens, we want U.S. policies to help bring about greater justice, democracy and stability in this hemisphere and to limit communist influence in the region.³¹⁵

Comparing the search for justice of many Salvadoran citizens to the North American colonies' struggle for independence from Great Britain in the 18th century, the Presbyterian Church in the United States referred to this historical example and ideal that constitutes one of those values of justice and democracy that the bishops were mentioning:

...many Christian insurgents in El Salvador who, having exhausted all peaceful means, consider their insurrection to be a legitimate Christian option. Fortunately, it will not be the first time in U.S. history that Christians face such a dilemma. It was faced by our revolutionary forebears with the radical doctrine of the Declaration of Independence which boldly states that a government must be overthrown when, as in El Salvador, it no longer rules with the consent of the governed.³¹⁶

Responding to the murder of their fellow sisters, a group of Maryknoll Sisters in Japan pointed to the same roots in a letter to President Carter: "...as human beings, Christians, American citizens, and Maryknoll Sisters...we strongly protest our country's use of men and resource to directly or indirectly kill and torture people, and to repress

³¹¹ Report on the El Salvador Protest Movement by Penn Kemble to Rev. Edmund Robb and Father James Schall, Institute on Religion and Democracy, 10 April 1981, in: NSA, *El Salvador: 1977-1984*, doc. # 01568.

³¹² *The Washington Post*, 4 May 1981, C1; *The New York Times*, 4 May 1981, A3.

³¹³ *The Washington Post*, 2 May 1981, B1.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, D.C., to the National Commission on U.S. Policy in Central American (Kissinger Commission) in: *Origins* 13:22 (20 November 1983), 380.

the very aspirations that are the foundation of our own free and democratic country.³¹⁷ The Witness for Peace delegates who traveled to Nicaragua identified with the same set of U.S. values. On their trips, they carried with them texts by Thomas Jefferson on the imperative of social justice and copies of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, that they distributed, asking for forgiveness for the U.S. betrayal of its own revolutionary ideals.³¹⁸ Some Witness for Peace travelers such as an eighty-two year old member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) simply stated: "I love my country and I can't bear it when it does stupid and selfish things."³¹⁹

The enhancement of human rights and democracy were part of the U.S. administration's foreign policy goals in El Salvador. While President Carter had emphasized these policy goals, the situation in El Salvador regarding these two aspects had gradually worsened during his term. President Reagan had integrated these two themes at the end of his first year in office. Despite the rhetorical commitment, the means of the *Realpolitik* militarized the region and, overall, prolonged human suffering. The religious groups were partly disappointed, partly upset, and enraged that their own country opted for military instead of civilian means in a conflict that was already characterized by a tremendous toll of death and violence. Fact-finding trips abroad, such activities as the Witness for Peace tours, and the direct word from faith-based groups abroad, for many clarified the suspicion that the United States was not promoting "due process," "free speech," and "freedom for association."³²⁰

In any analysis of public statements, it is extremely difficult to distinguish between true beliefs and the employment of an argument for political reasons. The religious groups sought access to the political discourse about El Salvador, target the middle-class church constituency, and change the current course of U.S. policy. Gaining

³¹⁶ Jorge Lara-Braud, "El Salvador: Dilemma for Christian Conscience," *Church and Society* 72 (November/December 1981), 7-14, 13. Lara-Braud was Director of the Presbyterian Church's Council on Theology and Culture at the time.

³¹⁷ Letter of Maryknoll Sisters in Japan to President Carter via the Ambassador in Japan, 15 December 1980, in: MSA, A10 OSC, El Salvador Martyrs, Box 7: Solidarity/Information Publications, Folder: Maryknoll Sisters Japan Region's OSC Activities 1980-1983. In a letter to friends, they express the same principles: "...U.S. is going to abandon its stand for human rights. We must never forget that our constitution and our country is built on a Bill of Rights!... We must...stop making the dollar our measure for our policies, and return to the ideals of our founding fathers..." in: *ibid.*

³¹⁸ Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 74.

³¹⁹ Griffin-Nolan, *Witness for Peace*, 34. See also "Local Missioner Sends a Message from Nicaragua," *The Catholic Standard and Times*, 11 August 1983.

³²⁰ Mary Solberg, Luthern Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), "Reflections on a Journey through Central America," 5 November 1982, in: CCEIA, Box 773, Folder: Central America-Academic/Legal Analysis.

political support and power in the democratic system concerns persuasion as much as presenting information. By using the argument that the Reagan administration's foreign policy means and their consequences were against U.S. traditions and principles, groups aspired to persuade policymakers and the general public of the "good intentions" of their arguments and gain support for their foreign policy vision. Responding to critics who labeled individuals' and specific groups' objectives as "anti-American," the reference to such U.S. heritages as the Declaration of Independence, liberty, and democratic participation/equal opportunity suggested an alternative model symbolizing positive elements for U.S. foreign policy.

One can conclude that the religious engagement in and for Central American societies brought about an interest in the fundamentals of U.S. foreign politics and policies. While attempting to help people in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and by criticizing official U.S. policies for neglecting the United States' own democratic roots, religious interest groups stressed "the finest line of our heritage: liberty and justice for all"³²¹ in the context of foreign policy. As much as they wanted these traditions to be applied for the sake of the international community, their foreign policy aspirations were also driven by a "national interest" in reforming the national ethos.³²²

In comparison to a country like Germany where the "state" has traditionally dominated the political system, the United States represents, at least, theoretically the archetype of a dynamic democratic and civil society. In the latter case, the state does not remain an abstract entity dominating its citizens or being unrelated to them. It is instead constituted by its citizens, who shape its political system. In the ideal case, the system responds to the needs of the citizens or acts in their name. The sovereignty, therefore, lies in the hands of the citizens - the society.³²³ The above-mentioned religious groups applied this concept to their country's foreign policy. As individual citizens, as well as societal groups, they took an active part in the conception and application of foreign policy. They demanded that their will, which they believed to be more congruent with U.S. values than their government's, was to be reflected in their country's foreign policy.

³²¹ Archbishop James Hickey, "Steps Toward New U.S.-Central America Relationship," in *Origins* 13:22 (20 November 1983), 383.

³²² See e.g. letter from Tom Marti, Maryknoll, to Representative Bonker, Chairman of House Subcommittee on Human Rights, 3 June 1982, in: MFBA, Justice and Peace Office, Box 2: Misc. Csp.: 1974-84, U.S. Congress, President: 1949-84, Folder: U.S. Congress, Csp. 1981-84. Various Protestant leaders talk about "our moral integrity as a nation," in: U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Foreign Assistance and Related Programs, 98th Cong., 2nd sess., 20 March 1984, 968-970, 969. See also Hickey, "Steps Toward New U.S.-Central America Relationship," in *Origins* 13:22 (20 November 1983), especially 383.

³²³ Czempiel, *Kluge Macht*, 30.

Transnational relations theorists have emphasized the importance of NGOs in bringing about a greater awareness of human rights and processes of democratization.³²⁴ Suggesting an overhaul of traditional foreign policy theory and practice, Ernst-Otto Czempiel, for example, especially makes note of international NGO-action that demanded democratization in Latin America and Eastern Europe in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Czempiel calls for an integration of these societal processes into the concept of foreign policy, an act he calls "*Vergesellschaftung*" of foreign policy.³²⁵ According to this concept, foreign policy should be made more accountable to the society (from which it originates). In the context of the Central American-U.S. relationship, societal groups were concerned about political conditions in El Salvador. They wanted to "save" El Salvador (or Nicaragua) from the negative effects of U.S. power. By doing so, they launched a process that can be called *Vergesellschaftung* of the foreign policy in the United States.

4.5 Political Impact and Conclusion

What did the broadening of the faith-based foreign policy participation achieve? As civic foreign policy of the 1980s was grounded in U.S. civil society, we have to look at various levels into which faith-based activism reached in order to gain influence. While attempts to change U.S. foreign and refugee policy were strong, so was activism at the grassroots level. The results of these separate spheres of action were different.

During the Reagan presidency, the course of U.S. policy toward Central America did not change dramatically. In fact, faith-based groups and leaders rallied around a foreign policy issue - military assistance - that developed in the reverse of the lobbying interests. While religious groups' lobbying campaign against U.S. military aid to El Salvador kept the idea of the 1970s human rights legislation alive, the lobbying results were meager. Between 1980 and 1982, U.S. military aid increased. For fiscal year 1983, it decreased by a tiny margin, only to more than double the following year.³²⁶ The majority of the religious community had not directly attacked economic aid, but had repeatedly and passionately lobbied for increased refugee assistance abroad. Between

³²⁴ See e.g. Martin and Sikkink, "U.S. Policy and Human Rights;" Brysk, "From Above and Below;" Risse-Kappen, *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In*; Burgerman, "Mobilizing Principles."

³²⁵ Czempiel, *Kluge Macht*, 30.

³²⁶ See statistics in Rosa, *AID*, 114. Rosa's data are based on U.S. government sources.

1980 and 1983, the smallest amount of U.S. economic aid was reserved for refugee and disaster assistance in El Salvador.³²⁷

The lobbying efforts could not halt U.S. military or economic aid. By the late 1980s, it became clear that "U.S. aid turned the Salvadoran army into a more potent force and artificially bolstered a deteriorating economy."³²⁸ Assistance never improved the government's ability to rectify the genuine social problems underlying the conflict nor the security forces' human rights record. The 1983 constitution even blocked land reform after less than 17 percent of the population had become beneficiaries.³²⁹

Obviously, the religious sector could not influence U.S. foreign aid policies as imagined and desired. Although the religious community concerned about human rights and peace issues in Latin America was not a political threat for policymakers in the Reagan administration, it was a constant irritating force able to influence various sectors of the society from the very onset.

Only briefly after President Reagan's inauguration in the spring of 1981, the new administration faced a strong campaign touching the administration's human rights related foreign policy concept. The religious human rights community emphatically contested the nomination of Ernest Lefever as the Reagan administration's Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs.³³⁰ Ernest Lefever, a former minister of the Church of the Brethren and religious peace activist-turned conservative, had frequently attacked the liberal church community for its empathy for Marxist ideas and abandonment of Western values in the late 1970s.³³¹ In 1981, he maintained, "the National Council of Churches and [its] principal constituent bodies have been influenced to an alarming degree by a version of 'liberation theology' that in its diagnosis of the world's ills bears a striking resemblance to Marxist thought."³³²

Apart from his critical views regarding the liberal church community's international agenda, Lefever's stand on human rights even challenged U.S. Congress' very own human rights policy. Favoring a passive U.S. human rights policy, he had

³²⁷ U.S. refugee and disaster assistance for El Salvador stopped in 1985 and 1986. Due to the earthquake in 1986, fiscal year 1987 provided emergency relief but in the following years no further refugee aid was provided. See Rosa, *AID*, 114. See also data for 1980-1986 in Frisk, "Displaced Persons," 42.

³²⁸ Terry Lynn Karl, "El Salvador's Negotiated Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1992): 147-165.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ See U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nomination of Ernest Lefever*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18, 19 May, 4, 5 June 1981.

³³¹ Through his book about the World Council of Churches and its relationship with the Third World (*From Amsterdam to Nairobi*, 1979) Lefever made his views known to a wider audience.

³³² Ernest Lefever, "Foreword," in Griffith, *Christianity and Politics*, viii.

recommended the removal of the human rights legislation of the 1970s, tying U.S. assistance to a country's record on human rights.³³³ During his confirmation hearings, he argued that the United States should not put pressure on such allies as Argentina or Chile despite their repressive military regimes. He maintained, "[i]t is arrogant for us to attempt to reform the domestic behavior of our allies and even of our adversaries."³³⁴ For the religious human rights community, Lefever stood for the abandonment of a U.S. concern for human rights.

As in the case of El Salvador, the religious community was not unified in its position against Mr. Lefever's human rights policy. Substantial differences existed in the argumentation and understanding of U.S. human rights priorities between the liberal and conservative wings. In the congressional hearings on Lefever's nomination, Robert Dugan, the Director of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) - the umbrella organization of most evangelical churches in the United States - and Seymour Siegel, the President of the American Jewish Forum, strongly supported the candidate's stand on human rights.³³⁵ Opposition came from the NCC, mainline Protestant denominations, Roman Catholic orders, the American Jewish Congress, and NGOs linked to the religious human rights network, such as the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, Clergy and Laity Concerned, and the Center for International Policy.³³⁶ The secular and religious human rights community was united in its campaign against Lefever's nomination. The AFSC, NCC, and UAHC formed the Ad Hoc Committee of the Human Rights Community consisting of 60 groups in order to contest Lefever's nomination.³³⁷ According to his earlier views of the liberal religious community, Lefever called the NGO campaign against his nomination "communist inspired" and concludes that these groups have "been generally opposed to the mainstream of American policy for the last 15 years or so..."³³⁸

In the end, the U.S. Senate recommended the rejection of Lefever's candidacy (13:4), Lefever withdrew his candidacy, and President Reagan had to nominate a new,

³³³ Arnson, *Crossroads*, 61.

³³⁴ "The Case Against Mr. Lefever," *The New York Times*, 2 March 1981, A18.

³³⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Nomination of Ernest Lefever*, 97th Cong., 1st sess., 18, 19 May, 4, 5 June 1981, 304-319.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 319ff., 351. The Center for International Policy was founded in 1975 as a research institution, focusing on issues of human rights, arms control, and social and economic justice and democracy in developing countries. Maryknoll funded the Center more morally than financially. See MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 1: Misc.Csp. 1977-1985, Folder: Center for International Policy 1977-1985.

³³⁷ Leon Howell, "Ernest Lefever at the Edge of Power: A Profile in Consistency," *Christianity and Crisis* 41:3 (2 March 1981), 36-45.

³³⁸ "Mr. Lefever's Colors," *The New York Times*, 22 May 1981, A27.

less controversial candidate. The religious human rights network apparently contributed to casting doubts on the human rights standards of the candidate. According to the New York Times, the human rights community showed that its "voice will not be weak."³³⁹ Tamar Jacoby interprets the Senate's rejection of Lefever's nomination as a strike against the Reagan administration's attempt to "dismantle the Carter policy on human rights."³⁴⁰ The Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman announced that Lefever's confirmation would be "an unfortunate symbol and signal to the rest of the world."³⁴¹ When Ronald Reagan finally nominated a new candidate in October 1981, the State Department announced that "human rights is at the core of our foreign policy," acknowledging that "[w]e will never maintain wide public support for our foreign policy unless we can relate it to American ideals and the defense of freedom."³⁴² The administration's new foreign policy rhetoric combined the human rights community's support for human rights with its anti-communist strategy. Jacoby maintains that the human rights lobby's "battle with the new President" influenced Reagan's human rights concept indirectly. By making human rights a policy means for its foreign policy goal ("contest with the Soviet bloc"), the Reagan administration employed a political strategy against its critiques.³⁴³

The "success" of their campaign boosted the religious groups' belief in being able to have an impact on the official course of policy. The Maryknoll-supported Center for International Policy thought that it did "a tremendous job in organizing a campaign to defeat Lefever that united the human rights community as never before...at least Reagan will think twice..."³⁴⁴ Elliot Abrams, Lefever's successor as candidate for Assistant Secretary for Human Rights, was confirmed. He stirred less criticism, when nominated but in subsequent years the administration's and the same religious groups' human rights concepts collided on various issues.

Lefever's nomination fell into a period of heightened alertness and foreign policy activism among religious activists. Events concerning El Salvador in 1980 and 1981 had spurred cooperation, information-sharing, and networking among the active religious

³³⁹ "Rights 1, Lefever 0," *The New York Times*, 14 June 1981, Section 4,19.

³⁴⁰ Tamar Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights," *Foreign Affairs* 64 (Summer 1986): 1066-1086, 1070.

³⁴¹ Quoted in Arnson, *Crossroads*, 61.

³⁴² William Safire, "Human Rights Victory," *The New York Times*, 5 November 1981, A27.

³⁴³ Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights."

³⁴⁴ Letter from Donald Ranard, Director of the Center for International Policy, to Tom Marti, Maryknoll's Office of Justice and Peace, 11 June 1981, in: MFBA, Office for Justice and Peace, Box 1: Misc.Csp. 1977-1985, Folder: Center for International Policy 1977-1985. See also "A Victory for Human Rights," *Christian Century* 98 (July 1981), 691-692.

community that was part of the human rights network of the 1970s. The nomination of a candidate who was opposed to the human rights and foreign policy vision of these religious groups was (or rather was perceived to be) a straightforward and simple case for promoting one's own concept and for being able to change the course of U.S. foreign policy. Furthermore, the religious human rights community had regarded the Human Rights office of the previous Carter administration as sympathizing with its own vision of U.S. human rights policy toward Latin America. The appointment of a person who had overtly criticized the groups' human rights position threatened their (already meager) access to the administration's human rights decision-making process.

Changes or shifts in policies are generally the result of a set of factors. In the case of Central American issues in the 1980s, the religious community was able to generate skepticism and criticism of the administration's priorities. In Congress, the nuns' murder case proved effective to demonstrate the brutality of El Salvador's civil war. Among the abstract, nameless statistics of deaths and torture, the four churchwomen stood out as concrete faces. What is more, they were U.S. citizens, working for a humane cause.³⁴⁵ Opinion polls attested the general opposition of the U.S. public to a military intervention by U.S. troops but also to indirect military aid to the region. There is agreement that the Reagan administration's decision to refrain from sending troops to El Salvador or Nicaragua was based on the Congress' and public's opposition.³⁴⁶

According to political scientist Mark Falcoff, the pressure of the religious human rights lobby challenged the administration's foreign policy strategy toward El Salvador only a few months after it was launching. At the end of 1981, President Reagan and his foreign policy advisers had switched from "defining El Salvador largely as a theater of the cold war" to using a rhetoric including human rights and economic reforms as foreign policy objectives.³⁴⁷ Congress was even more receptive. Despite a shift to the right as a result of the congressional elections of November 1980, the new U.S. Congress required the President to certify every six months that the Salvadoran government was making a "concerted and significant effort" to control human rights violations in order to guarantee

³⁴⁵ Arnson, *Crossroads*, 62.

³⁴⁶ Richard Sobel, "Public Opinion About United States Intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 53 (1989): 114-128, 116f; Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 364f.; Arnson, *Crossroads*, 83, 92.

³⁴⁷ Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 362f. See also Jacoby, "The Reagan Turnaround on Human Rights."

U.S. aid.³⁴⁸ Congress' certification requirement was a compromise. Congress could show its political muscle by partially restricting the administration's ability to implement its policy as desired, demonstrating concern for human rights while ensuring measures against a guerrilla victory in El Salvador.³⁴⁹

The religious groups could not influence the outcome of U.S. foreign and military policy in El Salvador (or Nicaragua) and, thereby, decrease the power of the security forces and the amount of violence and suffering. Yet, their lobbying activities have to be taken into full consideration in order to analyze congressional politics and voting behavior in the early 1980s regarding the nomination of Ernest Lefever, aid to El Salvador, and in the mid-1980s regarding the Nicaraguan contras.³⁵⁰ House Speaker Thomas O'Neill was one of Congress' main critic's of President Reagan's Central America policy throughout the 1980s. Church groups, especially Maryknoll, found an ally in him. Maryknoll had started to lobby O'Neill as early as 1968. While his district had a large Catholic population and his aunt was a Maryknoll nun, he appreciated the Maryknollers' knowledge and was receptive to their concerns.³⁵¹ O'Neill clarified that "I have a connection with the Maryknoll order...I have great trust in that order. When the nuns and priests come through, I ask them questions about their feelings, what they see, who the enemy is, and I'm sure I get the truth."³⁵²

During most of the 1982 debate on the human rights performance of the Salvadoran military and U.S. assistance, faith-based groups such as WOLA, Maryknoll, or the RTF, and the Catholic bishops were the principal societal opponent of President Reagan's El Salvador policy, noticeable in impacting Congress.³⁵³ Referring to the debate on U.S. aid to the contras, the Republican Representative Henry Hyde affirmed that "I don't know of a single foreign policy issue on which they've weighed in more heavily. It

³⁴⁸ While the Senate moved notably to the right, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign affairs committees was rather dominated by moderates and liberals.

³⁴⁹ Aranson, *Crossroads*, 67.

³⁵⁰ Schultz, *National Security*, 22. Regarding the congressional vote on U.S. aid to the contras and the influence of the church community, see "Churches: Moral Critics of U.S. Aid to Contras," *The Washington Post*, 14 April 1988. According to the article, the coalition of mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Jews has been "the loudest and most consistent critics of the Reagan administration's policy of military intervention in Central America, according to members of Congress, lobbyists, and spokesmen for the administration." See also "Churches Force Congress to Face the Morality Question," *The New York Times*, 15 April 1988; "Democrats Enlist Peace Groups to Court Votes For Contra Aid Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 March 1988, 1:4; "Church Groups Lobby Congress," *The Washington Post*, 30 January 1988, D18.

³⁵¹ "The Speaker and His Sources on Latin America," *The New York Times*, 12 September 1984, B10.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ "Mimeographs Roar in Propaganda War," *The Washington Post*, 7 March 1982, A1.

has been a clerical full-court press. They were particularly effective in marginal districts."³⁵⁴

Referring to President Reagan's first year in office, Mark Falcoff concluded in an article from 1984 that the "clerico-leftist foreign policy lobby" forced "the White House to expend for more 'energy and political capital' than it had previously anticipated."³⁵⁵ In fact, throughout the Reagan administration's two terms, the State Department and the CIA were concerned about their policies' impact on the public. The possibility of the faith-based groups' framing and shaping of aspects of the public debate outside and within Congress motivated the two Reagan administrations to act in order to counter their potential impacts. In the summer of 1983, the National Security Council (NSC) created the post of coordinator of a "Central America Public Diplomacy Campaign" who was to "oversee propaganda activities intended to increase support in public opinion for U.S. policy toward Central America."³⁵⁶ In fact, National Security Advisor William Clark informed the NSC that "there is no higher public diplomacy priority" on the mind of President Reagan than Central America.³⁵⁷

Between 1984 and 1986, the U.S. Department of State worked on this campaign, which included the guideline "to counter those church-supported organizations critical of U.S. policy."³⁵⁸ In the eyes of the State Department, "church-based supporters of the Sandinistas have been able to frame much of the public debate on Nicaragua. In fact, these networks have been successful in dominating the flow of information to local churches, parishes, and synagogues."³⁵⁹ Noting that U.S. public opinion is heavily weighted against the Central America strategy of the Reagan administration, the Central America public diplomacy campaign sought to target those religious mainstream institutions that have had no previous contact with Latin America.³⁶⁰ In a confidential

³⁵⁴ Quoted in "Churches: Moral Critics of U.S. Aid to Contras," *The Washington Post*, 14 April 1988.

³⁵⁵ Falcoff, "The Apple of Discord," 372.

³⁵⁶ Memorandum of U.S. National Security Council, Office of the National Security Advisor, 1 July 1983, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 01749.

³⁵⁷ Confidential memorandum to NSC Special Policy Group, 12 July 1983, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 01762.

³⁵⁸ Confidential memorandum from Robert Kagan, ARA, to Walt Raymond, National Security Council, regarding Public Diplomacy Plan for Explaining U.S. Central America Policy to the U.S. Religious Community, 18 September 1986, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 02880.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁰ Confidential memorandum regarding Public Diplomacy Plan for Explaining U.S. Central America Policy to the U.S. Religious Community, 18 September 1986, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 02880; "The Latin Americanist Establishment: A Survey of Involvement-An Interpretive Report," Non-Classified Report by the Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin American and the Caribbean, U.S. Department of State, 1 January 1985, in: NSA, *The Iran-Contra Affair: The Making of a Scandal, 1983-*

memorandum to the National Security Council, a State Department officer outlined the public diplomacy plan. Because of the activities of both, the religious leadership and the grassroots network, the State Department sought to aim at the local as well as on the national level to implement its public diplomacy objectives. The detailed description and naming of individual groups, as well as the long and extensive list of counteraction methods, give an idea of the potential and sincere leverage that the administration saw in the religious groups' civic foreign policy for its own policy objectives.³⁶¹

In the case of Central America-U.S. relations in the early 1980s, previous transnational experiences and value-oriented beliefs were challenged by the behavior of the U.S. government. Accordingly, numerous faith-based nongovernmental groups "transformed into an action network."³⁶² While the groups could not significantly change the behavior of the Salvadoran government or military policies of the U.S. administration, their activities became "significant transnationally and domestically."³⁶³ It has been argued that non-state actors played an increasingly larger role in disclosing human rights violations and making human rights principles and protection part of the peace process in El Salvador.³⁶⁴ According to one scholar, the change toward a human rights discourse within the El Salvador context delegitimized the efforts of the government to justify violations "by claiming their actions to be an "internal affair."³⁶⁵

1988, doc. # 00683. See also "Public Diplomacy Strategy Paper: Central America," Confidential strategy paper, U.S. Department of State, 19 March 1984, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 02014.

³⁶¹ The administration's campaign especially targeted "Reagan-friendly" church institutions and individuals such as the Institute on Religion and Democracy, Concerned Catholics, Catholic Center. Among the list of counteractions were: the creation of an internal reference book of supportive religious groups, the publication of fact-sheets countering the information of the religious human rights network, distribution of this information to the Institute on Religion and Democracy's list of journalists, the electronic media, to diocesan newspapers, to Christian colleges, and to Jewish groups. See Confidential memorandum from Robert Kagan, ARA, to Walt Raymond, National Security Council, regarding Public Diplomacy Plan for Explaining U.S. Central America Policy to the U.S. Religious Community, 18 September 1986, in: NSA, *Nicaragua: 1978-1990*, doc. # 02880. A secret report of a State Department official from 1986, focusing on the problem of disappearances in Guatemala reveals, a similar feeling of having to establish counteractions against skeptics - in this case in Congress and the media. The report states that only a credible database on human rights violations will make room for Congress' and the public's agreement with the administration's plans to provide military and economic aid. Interestingly enough, for this database the official suggests the integration of reports by religious-linked organizations, such as WOLA, which the administration itself had discredited for giving false and distorted facts." Guatemala's Disappeared 1977-86," Secret report drafted by J. Cason, ARA/CEN, 28 March 1986, doc. # 2454c, in: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB15/08-06.htm> (11 March 2000).

³⁶² Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 9.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁴ Forsythe, *The Internationalization of Human Rights*, 189f; Burgerman, "Mobilizing Principles," 917, 922. Members of the human rights network were involved in preparing the UN delegation's proposals, and network organizations watched observer mission and reform programs.

³⁶⁵ Burgerman, "Mobilizing Principles," 923.

Foreign NGOs also played supporting roles in the repatriation of refugees and in advocating refugees' position. In Central America the NGO sector grew rapidly in the course of the 1980s. By 1989, there were roughly 700 NGOs in El Salvador, over half of which were founded after 1985.³⁶⁶ These local NGOs were a vehicle for the humanitarian assistance of international agencies, who felt they were a more effective channel than governments.³⁶⁷ Transnationally speaking, U.S. church workers engaged in relief and assistance projects in Central America belonged to the growing NGO world in Central America.

U.S. groups played a major role in distributing information in the United States. Throughout the 1980s, reports of missionaries, relief agents, and fact-finding delegations were published in small-scale publications, church newsletters, denominational magazines, and nation-wide religious journals. While some had only a circulation of only a few hundred, Maryknoll's monthly magazine had a circulation of about one and a quarter million in the early 1980s.³⁶⁸ The U.S. faith-based groups' major impact was domestic, in the midst of U.S. society. The belief in being able to have an impact on U.S. policy was widespread and inspired more action. While being concerned about the war and human rights violations in El Salvador, civic foreign policy was increasingly directed toward the United States. The missionary impulse of faith-based human rights concerns addressed the negative consequences of U.S. power and called for the responsibility of U.S. citizens to correct injustices committed by their own government.

In the previous pages, we have seen to what extent the United States was militarily and politically involved in the civil war in El Salvador. While Nicaragua captured most of the government's and citizens' attention in the years after 1982, El Salvador remained on the political agenda, albeit in a new form. As a recipient of an unusual high number of refugees and migrants from El Salvador, the United States became itself afflicted by the war. The migration movement triggered and furthered the

³⁶⁶ Especially the radicalized, more educated sectors of the lower middle class, as well as many professionals and technocrats unable to work in the state, were attracted to the NGO sector. Pearce, "From Civil War to Civil Peace," 40.

³⁶⁷ The UN-supported International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA), first convened in May 1989, emphasized the refugees' role in the Central American peace efforts. The conference protected and fostered the space for local NGOs and peoples' organizations, notably in El Salvador and Guatemala, helping to legitimate such organizational development independent of government even before the peace accords were signed. It forced governments throughout the region at least to engage in dialogue with the nongovernmental sector, which they suspected of links with the revolutionary organizations.

³⁶⁸ Charles Austin, "Maryknollers Pursue Risky Path in the Third World," *The New York Times*, 21 June 1981, Week in Review, 9.

interest of U.S. citizens in Central America, particularly El Salvador and Guatemala. The missionary impulse of faith-based action not only demanded but practiced an active human rights policy in the national context, willing to take an active stand for human rights and genuine U.S. moral standards against U.S. law. With the emergence of the Sanctuary movement - the topic of the next chapter - the *Vergesellschaftung* of foreign policy processes in the United States matured and broadened.