



**HUMANITARIANISM AND POLITICS
IN CENTRAL AMERICA**

Gil Loescher

Working Paper #86 - November 1986

Gil Loescher is an associate professor in the Department of Government and International Studies and a departmental fellow of the Kellogg Institute at the University of Notre Dame. He recently co-authored Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door (The Free Press, 1986).

ABSTRACT

Refugee assistance, in common with other humanitarian work, tends to be perceived as somehow apart from politics. However, as this paper demonstrates, the treatment of refugees and indeed their very existence are intensely political issues. The author concentrates on refugee policy in Central America, examining in detail the situation of refugees in Mexico, Honduras and Costa Rica--the various actors, their interests, and the ways in which they are affected by geopolitics, ideology and ethnic politics. He analyzes the attitude of the United States and its impact, the role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the problems faced by voluntary agencies in their struggle for humanitarian "space," and the efforts of the refugee groups themselves, and concludes that only the return of peace and stability to Central America will ensure the protection of the region's refugees.

RESUMEN

La asistencia a refugiados, como otras formas de trabajo humanitario, tiende a ser percibida como algo aparte de la política. Sin embargo, como lo demuestra este ensayo, la ayuda a los refugiados y, hasta la existencia de los mismos, son asuntos intensamente políticos. El autor analiza la política de refugiados en América Central, examinando con detalle la situación de refugiados en México, Honduras y Costa Rica--los varios actores, sus intereses y los efectos sobre ellos de la geopolítica, la ideología y la política étnica. Se describe la actitud de los Estados Unidos y su impacto, el rol del Alto Comisionado para Refugiados de las Naciones Unidas, los problemas afrontados por agencias de voluntarios en su lucha por un "espacio humanitario" y los esfuerzos de los grupos de los mismos refugiados. Concluye que solamente el regreso de la paz y la estabilidad en América Central asegurará la protección de los refugiados en esa región.

Humanitarian work is generally perceived to be somehow separated from politics. This perception has persisted to some extent in the field of refugee protection and assistance. Yet workers in the field, especially those who assist refugees, are keenly aware that their activities are deeply intertwined with politics. Refugees are, in fact, an intensely political issue. Their existence affects both foreign and domestic policy, exacerbates inter-state conflicts and influences international attitudes.

An international regime--composed of UN agencies, governments, churches and voluntary agencies--evolved after World War II to aid and protect refugees. When the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, its work was defined as being entirely non-political. However the post-war period is full of examples where political considerations have influenced international and governmental responses to refugee crises. The Cold War in Europe facilitated the reception and care given to Eastern European refugees in the 1950s and 1960s. UNHCR officials have realized for some time that whatever power they exercise is largely dependent on the financial and political support of the United States Government. In the United States it has been common for the government to link humanitarian concerns to strategic national interests. Refugees have been used both symbolically and instrumentally to serve larger American foreign policy concerns.¹ "Freedom fighters" from Eastern Europe, Cuba and Indochina have been welcomed with open arms in the United States. For the US, these refugees demonstrate the presence of concrete failings in communist societies. Refugees have also been used to undermine and destabilize enemy regimes; some refugees have been armed and their counter-revolutions supported, both materially and ideologically.

Today pressures to politicize humanitarian crises are increasing everywhere in the world. Humanitarianism has become a political tool used to justify the arming of refugee camps in Pakistan, Thailand and Honduras, aiding insurgencies in Nicaragua, Ethiopia and

Angola, and suppressing insurgencies in El Salvador and elsewhere. The practice of using refugees in the service of foreign policy or military strategy is by no means limited to the United States, as is indicated by the activities of the PLO; Algerian support of Polisario guerrillas claiming the Western Sahara; use by Libya of the northern Chadians in operations against Chad; the activities of SWAPO in southern Africa; the sanctuary offered to anti-government Ethiopian groups by the Sudan and to Sudanese secessionists by Ethiopia; and by numerous other cases. Such developments have made it increasingly difficult to maintain any independence of the humanitarian "space" on the landscape of politics among nations.

The fate of efforts to build a "space" for humanitarian work is perhaps best exemplified by examining refugee policy in Central America. Since 1980 war and political persecution have uprooted several million people in Central America. As of early 1986 approximately 750,000 persons were displaced and unable to live in their home communities in El Salvador, another 500,000 were displaced within Guatemala, and at least 150,000 within Nicaragua.² Some of these persons live in recognized camps or settlements, but the majority are dispersed among the marginal population on the fringes of towns and villages. In addition, large numbers of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Nicaraguans have left their home countries as refugees and have sought safety in neighboring countries, where they are now playing an increasingly influential role in the politics of the region. This paper is concerned with the latter groups, particularly those refugees in Mexico, Honduras and Costa Rica.

As refugees outside of their country of origin, they are entitled to protection by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and should be safe from being returned home against their will. Refugees are also entitled to a range of human rights and social material assistance. However, the level of protection and assistance rendered to these refugees is greatly affected by geopolitics and ideology. When

discussing refugee issues, it is necessary not just to focus on international legal standards, but also to look at the various actors, their interests, and the ways in which geopolitics, ideology and ethnic politics factor into refugee policy.

For Central American governments, like governments elsewhere, refugees are intimately linked to their nations' security problems. Governments walk a tightrope trying to balance economic, national security and humanitarian interests. Most are extremely reluctant to accord legal status to refugees from neighboring countries for fear of damaging diplomatic relations, or encouraging a mass influx of people seeking refuge, or offering protection to an ideologically incompatible group of persons. Refugees place unacceptably high burdens on Central American governments which are facing severe economic problems. Refugees require jobs and social services at a time when an increased number of nationals within host countries are also in desperate need of such jobs and services, creating popular resentment toward the refugees and pressures on governments to restrict immigration. Often refugees are vulnerable because they are living on, or very near, disputed borders, and are either residing among combatants in an ongoing conflict or are perceived to be materially assisting guerrilla forces attempting to overthrow the government from which they have fled. At times Central American governments view refugees as illegal immigrants, guerrillas or subversives, and have even accused the host governments which provide refuge and the voluntary agencies which work for refugees of being "leftist sympathisers" or "contra supporters." As a consequence, on various occasions some host governments have closed their borders to refugees, treated all who attempted to cross as illegal immigrants, expelled new arrivals, incarcerated and harassed those in border camps, and denied access to refugee camps to journalists and voluntary agencies.

Mexico

In 1982-83, when tens of thousands of Guatemalans fled the "scorched earth" policy of General Rios Montt, the Mexican authorities initially tried to stem the outflow from Guatemala by forcibly turning already weak and famished refugees back across the border.³ Emergency medical care was needed, but the UNHCR and Mexican government were slow to respond to the crisis. The Catholic Diocese of San Cristobal de las Casas and the already impoverished local peasant communities struggled to fill monumental needs. The Mexican military and migration authorities harassed the refugees and even illegally deported large numbers back to Guatemala.

Eventually the Mexican authorities relented and accepted the fact that Guatemalans would continue to flee to Mexico for refuge. The Comission Mexicana de Ayuda a los Refugiados (COMAR), an interagency office within the Ministry of Interior which had been established in July 1980 but had functioned badly and was alleged to be corrupt, was reorganized in 1983 and empowered to direct a comprehensive response to the influx of Guatemalan Indians. With funding from the international community (UNHCR), over 80 camps were set up in the Mexican southern state of Chiapas to house 45,000 refugees, many of whom were women and children.

Nevertheless even today, three years later, living conditions in the camps in Chiapas are poor.⁴ Mexico discourages further refugee migration by providing only minimal services in the camps. Mexican officials argue that providing adequately for refugees could trigger further resentment on the part of local Mexican populations who suffer from hunger, disease and high infant mortality rates. Refugees cannot legally take jobs; when they do find employment, wages are much lower than those offered to Mexicans. Officially refugees have no freedom of movement. Claiming that refugee camps in Mexico harbor guerrillas and "subversives," the Guatemalan military has crossed the border and ruthlessly attacked refugees with impunity.

Despite these attacks, Mexico has been unwilling in the past to strongly protest the incursions across its border or to take any actions that the Guatemalan government could interpret as hostile. The two countries have historically had difficult relations over border incidents and over profound differences in political orientation.

Chiapas is territory which has strong historical and cultural ties to Guatemala, and Mexican authorities do not want to offend the Guatemalan government and military. Under these delicate and dangerous circumstances, Mexico is especially sensitive about unduly antagonizing its southern neighbor, fearing that a deterioration in its relations with Guatemala could lead to militarization of their common border and could diminish the possibility of Mexico serving as a future broker in Central American conflicts.

The presence of Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas, therefore, is a source of tension for Mexico's already troubled relations with Guatemala and is perceived by some Mexican officials as a national security risk. In light of these sensitive bilateral relations, Mexico allows Guatemalans to stay in its territory, but is unwilling to grant them refugee or asylum status which would allow them permanent residence and would thus imply a negative judgment on Guatemala's political system. Mexico handles the problem of the Guatemalan Indians' legal status by placing them in the category of "border visitors" and granting them temporary renewable visas. At the same time, Mexico has attempted to defuse the tension in Chiapas by moving the refugees away from the border.

Since mid-1984 about 20,000 refugees have been relocated from Chiapas to the states of Campeche and Quintana Roo in the Yucatan Peninsula, where they live on land donated by the Mexican government.⁵ Certainly these refugees are safer and more economically secure in the Yucatan, but understandably refugees have been extremely reluctant to leave the border area.⁶ The terrain and population in Campeche and Quintana Roo are quite different from Chiapas. The climate is hot and dry and there is a persistent problem of access to sufficient supplies of water. Chiapas, on the other hand,

is similar to those parts of Guatemala the refugees left behind. The geography is almost identical, and many of the refugees share parts of a common socio-cultural heritage with the local Indian population. In Chiapas, the Guatemalans are still close to their former homes. They only have to lift their eyes to the horizon to see the Guatemalan highlands.

Refugees tell horrifying stories about their escapes from Guatemala.⁷ Out of desperation and fear, entire families and Indian communities fled with practically no belongings. There was little food and water; travel was done mostly at night and over difficult terrain; many people suffered from disease and large numbers of the most vulnerable, especially old people and children, died on forced journeys. With the flight from Guatemala still fresh in their memories, most Indians are extremely reluctant to move again for fear of losing more of their children and undergoing new hardships.

However, COMAR and the UNHCR insist that, if possible, all the Guatemalans be relocated to the Yucatan Peninsula.⁸ They argue that only by moving from the border can the refugees be physically safe from further attacks by the Guatemalan army. It is, moreover, UNHCR policy to relocate all refugees at a safe distance from national borders. They also argue that only in Campeche and Quintana Roo can sufficient land and resources be made available to allow the refugees to become self-sufficient.⁹

In addition to such practical considerations, the Mexican government believes the relocation of Guatemalans from the strategically important border also serves politically useful ends.¹⁰ Although it is a poor and undeveloped region Chiapas is rich in natural resources, and therefore the Mexican government is concerned to protect it from potential unrest. The Mexican authorities fear that the Guatemalan refugees will strain the existing socio-political situation and create serious potential for political conflict. Chiapas is a politically unstable region which has more than its share of university strikes, political killings and land tenure problems,¹¹ and some Mexican officials fear that the Central American revolutions might extend into southern Mexico. As importantly, Mexico wants

to reduce friction with Guatemala by removing a significant source of that friction, the refugees, to a greater distance from the border.

All means of persuasion have been used to get the refugees to move from Chiapas. At times, COMAR has cut off supplies to certain camps. Mexican soldiers and border police have verbally assaulted the refugees and there have been repeated allegations of physical intimidation. When refugees do vacate their camps, the army has occasionally burned them in order to prevent refugees from returning.¹² There is a long tradition of disagreement between national government authorities and the Catholic Church and San Cristobal, and the presence of refugees in this region exacerbates these tensions. Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristobal has routinely criticized the government's violations against refugees' rights. The controversy over relocation has tended to polarize the positions of the Mexican government and UNHCR, on the one side, and the refugees, the local Catholic Church and voluntary agencies on the other.

The other issue which has gained increasing saliency since the inauguration of the civilian regime of Vinicio Cerezo in Guatemala in January 1986 is repatriation. This is also an issue which threatens to polarize even further the various parties involved with Guatemalan refugees. In recent years, a few thousand Guatemalans have returned home from Mexico. Although information about their fate and whereabouts is very skimpy, at least some of the returnees are said to have been forced to live in Army-run "model villages" or "polos de desarrollo" where, it is said, many of the inhabitants are virtual prisoners subjected to roll-calls, compulsory labor and re-education sessions.

The new President is the first civilian to lead Guatemala since a brief interlude in 1966, and he heads what is effectively the first popularly elected government since 1954. There are high hopes that Vinicio Cerezo will take advantage of this wave of support to consolidate civilian power and push through a program of political and economic reforms after decades of repression and military rule. In particular, hopes have been raised

regarding an improvement in the human rights situation in Guatemala. President Cerezo has invited all Guatemalan refugees abroad to return home, but relatively few have decided to accept his offer while the internal political situation remains unsettled. According to voluntary agencies working in the field and human rights organizations, the new President is having some difficulty ending violent repression and restoring civilian rule in the Guatemalan countryside. Although the controversial secret police force (Departamento de Investigaciones Técnicas) was officially disbanded in February 1986, human rights violations, including political assassinations, continue to occur.¹³ The "polos de desarrollo" have increased in number, and compulsory participation of all men between the ages of 18 and 50 in civilian patrols under army control persists despite the new President's promise to end this practice. The military controls the rural areas, and the displaced persons and returnees and the few voluntary agencies which are allowed to work with these groups also remain under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Defense.¹⁴

UNHCR has no official presence in Guatemala and the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Guatemala City is responsible for acting in their interest. The UNDP, however, has not been allowed to visit the areas in Guatemala to which the refugees have been returned. After discussions with Guatemalan authorities, the UNHCR did send a mission to Guatemala in April 1986 to discover the whereabouts of 17 families who had voluntarily repatriated under its auspices two months earlier. After encountering many difficulties, the UNHCR officials did establish that five of the families were living safely in the village of their choice.¹⁵ Clearly, however, no adequate mechanisms exist to monitor and guarantee the protection of returnees; nor at the present does there appear to be the prospect of any international agency taking on this responsibility. NGOs who work in this field, the Catholic Church of Guatemala¹⁶ and the refugees themselves do not consider the situation in Guatemala safe for repatriation at

this time. For the time being most of the Guatemalan refugees are content to wait. Thus, progress on relocation and repatriation remains at a standstill, despite the fact that President Cerezo has set up a "multiministerial" commission to discuss the future of Guatemalan refugees with the Mexicans and UNHCR in late July 1986.

The huge numbers of undocumented persons from Central America currently residing in Mexico present an even more intractable refugee problem. On the Pacific coast, around Tapachula, the entry point into Mexico from Guatemala and Central America, there are at least another 100,000 Guatemalans and an indeterminate number of Hondurans who are seeking refuge.¹⁷ There has always existed a traditional flow of migrant workers from Guatemala who worked on the coastal coffee, sugar, and cotton plantations in Mexico and returned home after the harvests. Today, however, the economic situation is so bad in the Guatemalan highlands that the Indian workers simply remain on the fringes of the plantations in Tapachula or go on to the United States after the harvest season. These people are largely unassisted by the international agencies and COMAR, although they are helped by the local Catholic diocese and by some voluntary agencies, principally CODAIF (Comite Diocesano para Ayuda a los Inmigrantes Fronterizos).

Perhaps the most vulnerable refugee population in Mexico is the Salvadorans. Mexico competes with the United States in having the largest numbers of Salvadorans outside of El Salvador. Estimates as to their numbers range from 100,000 to 200,000.¹⁸ Most Salvadorans arrive by air on tourist visas and overstay their time, or enter illegally through the coastal corridor at Tapachula. Since 1983, Mexico has tightened its visa requirements for Central Americans in an attempt to reduce the influx of illegal aliens. The Salvadorans living illegally in Mexico find it increasingly difficult to blend into the national society, both because of the continuing economic crisis and consequent high unemployment. Unlike the Guatemalans who are basically Indian peasants from

impoverished rural areas, the Salvadorans come from urban areas or small towns. Many are young men who have fled to Mexico out of fear of being pressed either into government military service or into the guerrilla forces. They live among the most marginalized populations in Mexico's urban barrios, and are vulnerable to extortion by minor Mexican officials. Although Mexico has been forced by national and international pressure to provide some kind of temporary solution to the plight of Guatemalans in Chiapas, no such similar pressures exist in the case of Salvadorans in the interior. Their plight has received little attention, and neither COMAR nor UNHCR provides direct social services to the Salvadorans. Only a handful of voluntary agencies, chiefly SEDEPAC (Servicio de Desarrollo y Paz A.C.), and Catholic and lay missionaries offer minimal help and programs.

In addition to their precarious economic situation, Salvadoran refugees have virtually no legal protection and live in constant insecurity. The UNHCR can offer them only limited protection. Mexico has not signed either of the two principal international refugee instruments, the 1951 UN Convention of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, and Mexican law does not recognize the status of refugee. However, Mexico is a signatory to several Inter-American conventions on asylum and does recognize asylee status. Unfortunately the protection offered under these conventions is limited, and flight solely because of personal safety is not sufficient ground to warrant asylum. In Mexico, asylum requires political persecution as the main cause of exodus.

For Salvadoran refugees, it is difficult to make a case for political asylum since persecution must also be proven on an individualized basis. The majority of Salvadorans cannot adequately document their cases, and only a small minority can prove direct political involvement as the cause of their flight. Because very few Salvadorans can prove individual persecution and because many are perceived as "economic migrants" the UNHCR office in Mexico City recognizes only a small number of Salvadorans as asylees.

The Mexican government, in turn, grants a legal status or security to only a handful of the candidates for asylum presented by UNHCR.¹⁹

North of Mexico City, Mexican immigration officials have intensified their search for Salvadorans. Illegal immigrants are easy prey to Mexican officials and bands of human smugglers ("coyotes"). In the early 1980s the Mexican government deported between 600 and 1000 illegal immigrants weekly but there was no way of determining who were "refugees" and who were "economic migrants."²⁰ Today's figures are not available. Mexico co-operates with US border officials in returning Central Americans apprehended at the US border back to Central America. It is part of US deterrence policy to stop the flow of over one-half million Central Americans in the United States by capturing potential refugees before they cross the border.

Mexico has tightened its control over Central Americans attempting to cross the northern border into the United States but prefers not to publicize such actions. Although both governments want to reduce the flow of Central Americans into their countries, bi-lateral co-operation on immigration matters has been limited by international and domestic policy factors. Mexico and the US have widely different perspectives towards the conflicts in the region; the Central American refugee issue exacerbates tensions over US treatment of Mexican nationals who still outnumber the Central American arrivals; and there exist significant internal Mexican pressures against any actions that appear to subordinate Mexican policies to US pressures.²¹ Those Salvadorans who manage to evade the Mexican authorities but are seized by the US border patrol after entering the US are confined to detention centers and deported.

About 500 Salvadorans per month are deported from the US, directly back to San Salvador.²² The Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) cooperates with the United States in the Salvadoran deportation program. ICM receives the returnees upon their arrival in San Salvador airport, registers the returnees and provides them with identity

papers and funds for initial transport and lodging. Between December 1, 1984 and November 30, 1985, 5,698 Salvadorans who were returned from the US were met by ICM.²³ Although ICM has attempted to maintain contact with those registered with it, it is by no means an international protection agency and cannot provide protection to the returnees. Information regarding the plight of Salvadoran returnees is extremely limited. The political Asylum Project of the American Civil Liberties Union claims that during 1985 there were 119 cases of returnees allegedly imprisoned, tortured, or killed,²⁴ but the US State Department disputes this finding. There remains an urgent need for a credible international agency such as UNHCR or the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) to monitor Salvadoran returnees.

Honduras

The refugee situation in Honduras is even more complicated than that existing in Mexico and is intimately tied to the geopolitics of the region. The actors are numerous and include not only the Honduran government and military, but also the Honduran Refugee Commission (CONARE), the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa, the UNHCR, the Honduran Catholic Church; voluntary agencies, the contras, international human rights and religious groups and the refugees themselves. Honduras has refugees from all three refugee producing countries in Central America: El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. Since the early 1980s there have been about 20,000 Salvadorans, 500 Guatemalans, about 20,000 Miskito, Sumo and Ramos Indians and other Atlantic coast refugees from Nicaragua, and about 6,000 Ladino or non-Indian Nicaraguan refugees. Among the Atlantic coast refugees, there are numerous factions, each with their own political agenda. Some authorities place the overall numbers of refugees in Honduras at a much higher level,²⁵ and it is clear that the inflow of refugees is increasing daily.

There are several strategic, historical and legal influences on refugee policymaking in Honduras. Real decision-making power remains in the hands of the military commanders in Honduras. The military, in turn, is directly influenced by the US Embassy.²⁶ Honduras regards the refugee problem as a matter of national security, rather than a humanitarian issue. Thus, the treatment and protection accorded refugees are determined largely by geopolitical and strategic considerations. Although refugees are a microcosm of the geopolitical struggle in the region and are viewed by the Honduran military and the US in East-West, communist versus non-communist terms, history and geography also have their impact on policy, and to a certain extent moderate the effect of ideology on policymaking.

Traditionally, Hondurans perceive El Salvador as posing the principal threat to their security. This is partly the result of demography. El Salvador is the most densely populated country in the region and Honduras has far fewer people per square mile. For some time there has been a traditional migration flow from El Salvador to Honduras. Salvadorans are viewed as industrious and aggressive, and Hondurans don't want them to settle in their country. The so-called "Soccer War" in 1969 between the two countries was a result of these migration tensions. Nicaragua, on the other hand, is not viewed as a traditional threat to Honduran security. Although there were border clashes in the 1950s and 1960s, and problems during the Sandinista insurgency in the 1970s, the Honduras-Nicaragua relationship has been more harmonious than the Honduras-El Salvador relationship. Thus, the Honduran military is divided over how to treat Nicaragua. The American-trained soldiers share the US geopolitical view of the Sandinistas and consider the communists the principal threat to Honduran security while the "Soccer War" veterans see El Salvador as the danger. These soldiers resent the training of Salvadoran soldiers on Honduran territory and view such efforts as enabling El Salvador to one day more easily achieve its ambitions and seize Honduran territory.

In addition, Honduras is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or the 1967 Protocol. Honduran authorities tacitly accept the UNHCR's designation of Salvadorans and Guatemalans as bona fide refugees, so long as they remain in closed camps. Honduras accords no legal status or recognition to refugees within its borders. As in Mexico, any refugees apprehended outside the camps are considered illegal aliens and vulnerable to deportation. Furthermore, there is no guarantee for the physical safety of these individuals because the camps are located only a few kilometers from the militarized border zone. By leaving the legal status of refugees unresolved and by treating refugees as an essentially political problem to be resolved outside of any legal framework, the Honduran authorities have formulated policy using chiefly ideological and geopolitical considerations rather than legal considerations. This development has had a powerful impact on the level of protection accorded refugees of certain nationalities in Honduras and has resulted in a "double standard" being applied which discriminates against Salvadorans and Guatemalans and favors Nicaraguans.

To date, the response of Honduras to the Salvadorans and Guatemalans seeking refuge in the country has been to place them in camps under strict military guard. Violent crimes against the refugees have been committed with apparent impunity. The worst such attack occurred on August 29, 1985 when the Salvadoran camp at Colomocagua was surrounded by Honduran military forces while a division of the COBRAS, an elite counter-insurgency force, entered the camp and terrorized the refugees. In the violence that followed two refugees were killed, one a 3 month old baby reportedly kicked to death, and thirteen were wounded.²⁷ It was the first time in Latin America that a host government army killed and wounded refugees in a United Nations-run camp. Ten Salvadorans were subsequently detained, tortured, and confined in small prison cells in Tegucigalpa until their release for resettlement abroad in January 1986. Attacks against

individual Salvadoran refugees continue and local and international voluntary agency personnel daily risk their lives to perform their duties.

This policy of persecution of Salvadoran refugees stands in marked contrast to the policy applied to refugees from Nicaragua. Unlike the Salvadoran refugees who are sympathetic to the forces fighting against the US-backed government of El Salvador, most Nicaraguan refugees support the US-backed contras or, at least, are opposed to Nicaragua's Sandinista government. Nicaraguan refugees are not subjected to the same strict monitoring by the Honduran army. Although the freedom of movement previously accorded Nicaraguan refugees has been curtailed, they enjoy much greater freedom of movement than the Salvadorans and can work outside their camps. Contra commanders enter Nicaraguan camps and openly recruit young refugee men into the armed forces. This contrasts sharply with the officially-sponsored campaigns of vilification depicting the Salvadoran refugees and the voluntary agencies which help them as threats to Honduran national security.

Tensions between the Honduran authorities and the Salvadorans continue because of the Hondurans' belief, shared by the US Embassy, that the refugee camps along the border provide direct support for Salvadoran guerrillas.²⁸ The refugees in these camps originate principally from the border departments of Morazan, Cabanas and Chalatenango where guerrilla activity is intense. Therefore, the influence of the FMLN forces among the refugees is great, but according to the UNHCR and voluntary agency staff who actually live in the camps, the Salvadoran refugees provide moral, not strategic support, to the guerrillas.²⁹ The refugee camps at Colomocagua and San Antonio house for the most part women, children and old men, and are unarmed. As a result, refugees have not been able to defend themselves against the Honduran army during previous attacks and harassments. The voluntary agencies which distribute food and medicine to the refugees and oversee the camp workshops which produce clothes and

boots also completely disagree with Honduran and US allegations that the refugees are channelling significant amounts of supplies (boots, clothes, food, medicine) to guerrillas fighting inside El Salvador.³⁰ Both sides remain adamant that their positions are correct and the issue symbolizes the intensity of the conflict between Honduras and the US on the one hand, and the refugees and certain voluntary agencies on the other.

There have also been attempts to relocate and repatriate Salvadoran refugees. The Honduran military (and the US government) have in the past pushed hard for relocating--by force if necessary--the Salvadoran refugees encamped along the border to Mesa Grande or to other suitable sites further inland. Relocation, it is believed, would cut the guerrilla life-line and clear the border for military manoeuvres.³¹ The refugees, backed by the voluntary agencies, believe that they should be allowed to stay where they are with improved protection and greater opportunities for self-sufficiency. There was also concern that, regardless of the merit of the move from the border, it could not be accomplished without violence. The UNHCR supported an earlier relocation of Salvadorans which took place in spring 1983. This move was forcible and involved considerable hardship and loss of life.³² No buildings were prepared prior to the refugees' arrival at the relocation site at Mesa Grande and there was a severe shortage of water. Food supplies were cut off to those who refused to relocate, and numerous refugees and Honduran voluntary agency workers were murdered or injured. Conditions were so horrible that several thousand Salvadorans repatriated to El Salvador rather than remain in Honduras. Because UNHCR supported the relocation, relations between it and the voluntary agencies deteriorated significantly.

When the Honduran government announced its plans for a second relocation in December 1983, UNHCR made clear that it would support further relocations only if the refugees were given land to farm, were allowed to become self-sufficient, and could obtain work and have freedom of movement. Government efforts to establish a new

relocation program faltered because of vociferous local opposition from the population at proposed relocation sites in Olanchito in northern Honduras and in other states. The Honduran populace deeply resented giving over large tracts of land to Salvadoran refugees when they themselves had little or no land to till. Moreover, the Honduran army was divided over the relocation issue and did not want to see Salvadorans as permanent settlers. International human rights and religious groups also criticized the relocation plan. In the light of this opposition the Honduran authorities were forced to publicly retreat. José Azcona, the President of Honduras, has recently affirmed that relocation is no longer a priority for Honduras and that refugees will not be moved against their will.³³ Instead, the Honduran authorities are escalating their military presence around the camps and have assumed more direct administrative control over the refugee programs inside the camps.³⁴

Salvadoran refugees have also been threatened with possible repatriation back to El Salvador. The United States promotes repatriation partly as a means to improve the human rights image of the Napoleón Duarte regime. Several thousand Salvadorans have returned home in the past five years but hard information concerning their whereabouts and physical security is lacking. As in Guatemala, UNHCR has no official presence in the country and acts through a single UNDP person who cannot possibly monitor returnees adequately. Unlike the Guatemalan situation, however, there does exist an official tripartite commission (El Salvador, Honduras, and UNHCR), but the Salvadoran military authorities do not actually want more returnees from Honduras. They feel that the refugees form part of the guerrilla opposition and can be more easily controlled outside the country than inside.

The difficulties facing Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras are primarily political. Problems of protection arise from the activities of the Nicaraguan armed opposition forces (contras) and not from the Honduran military. Both Ladino and Indian refugees serve

convenient symbolic and instrumental purposes in US foreign policy. Symbolically they are perceived by anti-communists as fleeing a repressive totalitarian regime. By "voting with their feet," they are sending a clear message to the world that life inside Nicaragua is intolerable. Nicaraguan refugees are also instrumentally useful. They are "freedom fighters" who can be trained and used to wage revolutionary war against Nicaragua, America's principal adversary in the region. Thus US humanitarian aid to these groups and to the contras is perceived to have openly become a political tool to arm refugee camps and to aid insurgencies. The Honduran position is more complicated because Honduras has maintained an official policy of not openly allowing the contras to operate within its territory, while quietly cooperating with US efforts to supply them.

Nicaraguan refugees, particularly Ladinos, are served solely by the Honduran Red Cross and by conservative Protestant evangelical agencies who are anti-Sandinista and openly support the contras.³⁵ Many of the refugees are peasants fleeing fighting in the Nicaraguan countryside; others are young men fleeing conscription into the Sandinista military. The domestic situation will probably deteriorate further now that the Sandinistas have toughened their stance towards domestic opponents, particularly the press and the church, and more Nicaraguans will flee to Honduras. Because of the partisan political setting, many voluntary agencies have shied away from working in these camps. The lack of a more neutral international presence in these camps has made it easier for the contras to exploit the refugees themselves for political and military purposes.

The 20,000 Miskitos and other Atlantic coast refugees who have taken refuge in the sparsely populated region near Honduras' Caribbean coast are particularly exploited for political purposes. Having fled Nicaragua in large numbers during 1981-83 in order to escape Sandinista repression and political indoctrination,³⁶ Miskito and Sumo Indians were manipulated ideologically, and subjected to forced military recruitment by militant

Nicaraguan Indian groups (Misura) allied with the contras, particularly along the Rio Coco between Honduras and Nicaragua.

The militarization of the border provided a significant barrier to effective relief and protection work by UNHCR which began a programme in the Honduran Mosquitia in 1982. In order to offer better protection and relief, UNHCR relocated refugees away from the troubled border in 1983 to five dispersed settlements further inland. Over the next two years conditions for these refugees improved, and in contrast to Salvadorans in western Honduras, Nicaraguan Miskito and Sumo Indians enjoyed freedom of movement, access to markets and adequate material assistance. However, problems of protection continued as Misura attacks on Miskito villages inside Nicaragua produced a continuing flow of refugees who were subjected to forced recruitment and to punishment for non-cooperation by Misura.³⁷ Until early 1985, UNHCR did not have protection officers based in the region, and World Relief, the principal voluntary agency contracted by UNHCR to carry out relief operations, placed inexperienced North American personnel in key positions in the refugee settlements.

In 1985 new problems occurred. The World Relief/UNHCR effort to make the refugees self-sufficient was hampered by severe restrictions on the cutting of wood for land clearance and domestic use by the Honduran Forestry Commission. As a consequence rice production fell from 800,000 pounds in 1984 to 200,000 pounds in 1985. The Miskitos also complained that the soil around the inland settlements didn't produce a good bean crop, a staple of the Indian diet. In late 1984 and 1985 these conditions encouraged a mass movement of refugees back to the border in late 1984 and 1985 where land was more fertile and government wood cutting restrictions did not apply.³⁸ At about the same time, at the urging of Rep. Robert Livingstone, the US Congress voted to provide \$7.5 million in "humanitarian" aid to Misura. These development projects, which were administered by USAID and by partisan evangelical

organizations on the Honduran-Nicaraguan border, created considerable political tensions and pulled refugees away from UNHCR settlements in the Honduran Mosquitia.

During the past several years, the Nicaraguan government has issued several amnesty decrees for rebel Indian groups in an attempt to attract home all Miskito and other Atlantic coast refugees.³⁹ In 1985, wide-ranging negotiations were initiated with some of the armed Indian opposition on the subject of regional autonomy. Limited peace accords between the government and indigenous groups made possible the return of 12,000 internally displaced Miskitos and Sumos to the Rio Coco. During the same year, some 2,000 Miskitos who had taken refuge on the Honduran bank of the river returned to Nicaragua on their own, and another 500 to 600 Miskitos were also repatriated from the inland settlements in Honduras. According to UNHCR,⁴⁰ the number of returnees would have been much larger had the refugees been allowed to travel direct from the refugee settlements to their former homes, a distance of less than 100 kilometers. Instead, UNHCR was required to move refugees in small groups out of the Honduran Mosquitia to transit camps where they had to wait for transport to the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast which was a long distance away. This costly and complicated procedure was eased considerably when UNHCR finally won the approval of the Honduran authorities to transport the refugees by air from the Atlantic coast of Honduras direct to the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua in early 1986.

Hopes for an early repatriation, however, will continue to be complicated by grave security and economic problems inside Nicaragua. Much of the Indians' former land is militarily contested, and entire villages have been destroyed by military action or natural decay since the early 1980s. The provision of social services to the Atlantic coast by the government is made difficult by poor transport and the lack of other infrastructure in the region. Government health and education workers sent to help resettle refugees have been murdered or kidnapped. Conflict between Sandinista and Indian groups continues

despite the partial peace agreements. This general condition of insecurity has caused over 10,000 Miskitos at the Rio Coco to again flee into Honduras during late 1985 and early 1986.⁴¹

The situation for Nicaraguan Indian refugees thus remains unsettled and is highly complex. In mid-1985, the militant Indian group Misura was officially dissolved and replaced by a new contra-aligned organization called Kisan. Although these developments have resulted in fewer military attacks inside Nicaragua from Honduras, there remains the danger of a renewed general military offensive from Honduras, particularly now that the contras are once again receiving large-scale funding from the United States. The UNHCR continues to play an important protection role in the region in spite of efforts by the Honduran authorities to persuade UNHCR officers to withdraw from the area. Since early 1985, World Relief has largely replaced its North American staff with Honduran personnel. Thus, although ideological pressure on the Miskitos and Sumos in the settlements is still present, it is no longer reinforced by World Relief workers. However, UNHCR funding for the Miskito refugee programs has been cut back considerably while USAID and private development projects continue to pull refugees to the border. The most alarming developments in mid-1986 are the increasing efforts by Miskito contra groups to forcibly recruit refugees for combat.⁴² These developments seriously endanger both relief and protection efforts.

Costa Rica

Although the refugee situation in Costa Rica is not as acute as that in Honduras or Mexico, political and foreign policy considerations also play a part in shaping Costa Rica's response to refugees. Costa Rica is the recipient of refugees from the three principal refugee-producing countries in the region: El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua. The country has a huge international debt which has forced it to become more dependent on

the US. Local economic problems have also limited assistance and employment opportunities for refugees. There are a large number of undocumented immigrants in Costa Rica,⁴³ particularly from Nicaragua. Former President Luis Alberto Monge recently termed this problem "a migratory timebomb."⁴⁴ Public perception that jobs are being lost to these newcomers, while large amounts of assistance are also being provided for them, has given rise to an intense and emotional debate over Nicaraguan refugees within Costa Rica.

Costa Rica is renowned for its democratic, peace-loving traditions. Situated in a region where armed conflict has recently been the rule, Costa Rica has not had a standing army since 1948. With the intensification of Cold War politics in Central America since 1979, however, Costa Rica has inevitably been drawn into the conflict in the region. US military aid to Costa Rica rapidly increased during the early 1980s, and Costa Rica's civil guards were trained as a rapid reaction force by US and Israeli advisers. Many US economic projects in Costa Rica also appear to serve military ends.⁴⁵ For example, US military engineers are upgrading the Pacific coastal highway, one of two major roads which run from the north of Costa Rica to Panama in the south. The work will enable this road to bear far heavier loads than required for commercial traffic, thereby making it potentially easier to supply arms for the contras from US bases in Panama. Roads are also being upgraded in the eastern region of Costa Rica near the Nicaraguan border, raising suspicions that they are being prepared to move forces quickly in what will become a war-zone in time of crisis. Near its northern border, Costa Rica has in the past played host to two contra forces: Arde, led by the former Sandinista leader Eden Pastora; and the CIA-backed Uno group. Cross border clashes between these groups and Sandinista forces were common.

The UNHCR has provided the funds for the refugee program, but has no permanent presence in these camps. Until January 1986, a national organization ran the

camps for Nicaraguans in an inefficient, corrupt and politicized manner.⁴⁶ Some of them were found to have paid themselves excessively high salaries, and to have had direct links to the contras and to have run paternalistic programs. The camp for Atlantic coast Nicaraguan refugees at Limon, which I visited in January 1986, had the worst physical conditions of any camp I saw in Central America. Although the refugees were apparently well-fed and had adequate health care, the housing was inferior and the camp inhabitants appeared despondent and apathetic for lack of anything to do. There was no land to farm and no workshops and the refugees were entirely dependent on the outside assistance provided them. Conditions in other camps were somewhat better. A large number of the inhabitants were single young Ladino men, many of them teenagers, who had fled forced conscription or bad economic conditions. They led a completely idle existence and were under incredible pressure to join the contra forces.

Despite such a politicized environment, in early 1986 along with UNHCR and the Centre for Social and Political Analysis (CASP/RE), a national non-governmental organization, Costa Rican authorities began to reconstruct in early 1986 the refugee programs for Nicaraguans, to make the camps more participatory and less paternalistic.⁴⁷ These development coincided with the election of Oscar Arias as the new President of Costa Rica. In early 1986, Arias demonstrated his determination to stem the militarization of his country and to criticize US anti-Sandinista policy.⁴⁸ At the same time, Costa Rica reached a tentative agreement with Nicaragua to neutralize the border and to try to establish a civilian monitoring team to prevent contra raids into Nicaragua.⁴⁹ However, as war, deteriorating economic conditions and political repression increase in Nicaragua, it is likely that Costa Rica will find itself as the country of first asylum for greater numbers of Nicaraguans.

The US View of the Problem

Despite the gravity of the situation and the opposition to U.S. policy from many international voluntary agencies, the U.S. has vigorously supported the forced relocation of Salvadorans from the Salvadoran border to the interior of Honduras and Guatemalans from Chiapas to the Yucatan Peninsula, and it has not protested when refugees near the Nicaraguan borders in Honduras and Costa Rica have participated, with anti-Sandinista exiles, in armed incursions into Nicaragua. It labels Salvadoran refugees as guerrillas in disguise and manifests suspicion, if not hostility, towards the agencies working with refugees in Salvadoran camps. Nicaraguan refugees, on the other hand, are seen as "freedom fighters" who are encouraged to wage a war of resistance in Nicaragua.

The Role of UNHCR

The activities of UNHCR are directly affected by the geopolitical and ideological context in which the US and local governments perceive the refugee issue. The UNHCR has been criticized by voluntary agency officials, as well as by representatives of governments which finance the UNHCR program in the region, for its inability to protect refugees from harassment and for its failure to provide an adequate level of assistance. As the principal donor of UNHCR programs in the region, the US has used its financial leverage to improve conditions for Nicaraguan refugees in Honduras and Costa Rica and has exerted pressure to influence UNHCR decisions about such issues as the relocation or repatriation of Salvadoran refugees in Honduras.

US influence aside, the institutional capacity to ameliorate the refugee situation in Central America is also limited by the willingness of national governments to co-operate. UNHCR can call attention to the legal obligations undertaken by governments that have adhered to the UN Refugee Convention and Protocol, but it is without the ability to change the course of a determined government that intends to violate treaty

commitments to protect and aid refugees or to ignore the policies of the United Nations with regard to refugees.

Honduras and Mexico are not signatories to the UN Refugee Convention and Protocol, and although the non-refoulement principle (no forcible return to country of origin) is confirmed in their domestic laws, neither country has formal procedures to determine refugee status. In both countries, UNHCR operates large-scale refugee programs, but there are disagreements over how the UNHCR exercises its protection mandate. There have also been tensions over the management of refugee assistance programs in all three countries, Mexico, Honduras and Costa Rica.

Caught between its general function to offer protection to refugees and the necessity to work closely with the country of first asylum, UNHCR is reluctant to irritate local authorities or the US by pressing too hard on protection problems in Central America. As noted, the limited effectiveness of UNHCR to guarantee protection is also partly due to UNHCR's special relationship with the United States. Dependent on the US for a large percentage of its annual budget, UNHCR simply lacks the financial independence and institutional strength to challenge its largest benefactor.

The Struggle for Humanitarian Space

Voluntary agencies, ranging from international NGOs to churches, have also discovered that their ability to operate independently of the US is limited and at the mercy of events which remain largely under the control of military and strategic planners. In Central America these institutions simply by virtue of working in certain refugee camps, are often regarded by the security forces of local governments and by the US as subversives or sympathizers with the opposition forces. In this kind of ideologically-charged environment many voluntary agencies find it extremely difficult to carry out humanitarian programs of assistance. Churches and voluntary agencies have thus met

with many difficulties, and there have been kidnappings, deportation and even the deaths of many of their religious and lay workers. In Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugee camps in Honduras and Mexico, voluntary agency representatives are having to assume protection functions at considerable personal risk to themselves. The presence of international agency staff should serve to reinforce the security of the refugees and of the local national workers in the camps. In many instances, respect for the basic human rights and personal security of refugees depends on the whim of junior military officers or migration officials locally in command of the camps. Not only do voluntary agencies and churches provide local protection but these institutions are also particularly influential in shaping international public opinion. Concerned churches and human rights organizations provide information on refugee conditions to the public and monitor human rights abuses and violations of international agreements. Private and international groups have raised loud objections to past border incidents in Mexico and Honduras, when refugee camps were attacked by military forces and refugees forcibly refouled.

However, although voluntary agencies view themselves as the "world's conscience" for refugees, they are themselves rarely totally neutral in a political sense. Some agencies take pride in being able to work on both sides of a political fence, but most voluntary agencies are selective in the places they choose to work and the refugee groups they choose to assist. In their effort to counteract US regional policies, some voluntary agencies have emphasized their commitment to Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees but have shied away from assuming a similarly strong protection role for Nicaraguan refugees. Local governments reinforce this selectivity by making it difficult for voluntary agencies to have a presence in refugee camps of all political and ideological persuasion. Such selectivity increases the risk of voluntary agencies being used for narrow political interests, and makes some of them appear to be as discriminatory as the US government policies they oppose.

While refugees are admittedly pawns in relations between states, they are still not the helpless victims intergovernmental and voluntary agencies often picture them to be. Such stereotyping is usually not only inaccurate but also encourages paternalism. Over the past six years some of the refugee groups in Central America have patiently built up, under incredibly difficult circumstances, the major elements of the infrastructure required for their community. These groups request that their attempts simply to rebuild their lives be respected and that their human rights not be violated. Other refugee groups are factionalized and have been intimately involved in politics. As we have seen, there are instances where some refugees have used their countries of asylum as a base for guerrilla warfare and are alleged to even be supplied with arms, while still receiving refugee assistance.

Many of the refugees in Central America live in impoverished circumstances, often herded together in camps in which they are virtual prisoners because of the extreme danger they would face if they attempted to leave. Other groups of refugees are subject to forced recruitment and are dealt with as expendable pawns in an effort to overthrow the Marxist regime in Nicaragua. None of these refugees have any prospect of rebuilding more or less normal lives until the conflict is over. Unfortunately, the short-term prospects are not favorable. With the rapid escalation of arms shipments in mid-1986 by the US and the Soviet Union to client regimes in Central America, the regional conflict and the massive outflows of refugees will increase.

There exists today an urgent need to maintain a separation between military and humanitarian activities in Central America and to elevate the needs of refugees above the limitations of immediate political concerns. Regional efforts to achieve these objectives, such as the "Cartegana Declaration on Refugees"⁵⁰ and the increasing attention paid to the problems of refugees and asylum seekers in the western hemisphere by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights,⁵¹ are commendable, but only the return of

peace and stability to the region will ensure the international protection of refugees in Central America.

ENDNOTES

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3. For background see Elizabeth Ferris, "The Politics of Asylum: Mexico and the Central American Refugees," Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs, Vol. 26 No. 3, August 1984, pp. 357-384. See also America's Watch, Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico: 1980-1984 (New York, September 1984); and "Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico," Cultural Survival Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall 1984), pp. 46-58.
4. The author visited refugee camps in Chiapas and in Campeche, Yucatan Peninsula in January 1986.
5. Ferris and Americas Watch, op.cit. See also Sergio Aguayo, "Refugees: A New Piece in a Conflict-Ridden Regional Crossword Puzzle" (Colegio de México: Mexico, 1983).
6. Author's interviews with Guatemalan refugees in Chiapas and Campeche, Mexico, January 1986.
7. Ibid.
8. Author's interviews with UNHCR and COMAR (Mexican Commission to Aid Refugees) in Chiapas, Campeche and Mexico City, January 1986.
9. Ibid. One UNHCR official believes that the resettlement centers in Campeche and Quintana Roo can be mostly self-sufficient by the end of 1987. Other UNHCR officials in Geneva are more pessimistic about the possibility of the resettlement centers becoming self-sufficient because of a lack of land to farm on. The program is also criticized by some for being too expensive.
10. Author's interviews with Mexican government and Catholic Church officials and lay workers, Chiapas and Mexico City, January 1986. See also America's Watch, Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico: 1980-1984 (New York, September 1984); Aguayo, op.cit., and Ferris, op.cit.
11. See Amnesty International, Mexico: Human Rights in Rural Areas (London, 1986); Ferris, op.cit., p. 366.

12. Author's interviews with Guatemalan refugees in Campeche, with Bishop Samuel Ruiz of San Cristobal, and with Catholic Church officials, January 1986. Past COMAR activity has also been detailed in Aguayo, op.cit.

13. Patricia K. Hall, "Military Rule Threatens Guatemala's Highland Mayan Indians," Cultural Survival Quarterly, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1986), pp. 48-52; Jenny Wats, "South of El Norte," Amnesty Newsletter, No. 19 (February/March 1986); Latin American Weekly Report, June 6, 1986; New Republic, June 1986; and author's interview with Amnesty International officials, London, September 1986.

14. Patricia K. Hall, Ibid., and Minutes, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Subgroup on Mexico and Central America, New York, March 3, 1986, pp. 3-4 and Central America San José, Costa Rica, November 21-23, 1985, p. 5.

15. Carlos Maldonado. "Voluntary Repatriation: A Slow Start," Refugees, No. 31 (July 1986), 22.

16. "Refugees in Mexico an Irritant," Latin America Weekly Report. July 17, 1986.

17. Edelberto Torres-Rivas, Report on the Condition of Central American Refugees and Migrants (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University, Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance, July 1985) p. 39.

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19. Author's interviews with UNHCR officials in Mexico City, January 1986 and with Patricia Weiss-Fagen, Washington D. C., December 1985.

20. Ferris, op.cit., p. 368.

21. Author's interview with Patricia Weiss-Fagen, Washington D.C., December 1985 and Sergio Aguayo, Mexico City, January 1986.

22. Author's interview with UNHCR official, Washington D.C., December 1985; Loescher and Scanlan, op.cit.

23. Author's interview with Albert Corkos, Intergovernmental Committee for Migration, San Salvador, January 1986.

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25. See for example: US Committee for Refugees, World Refugee Survey, 1985, in Review (New York: 1985) p. 58.

26. James LeMoyne, "US Role Grows in Honduras," International Herald Tribune, July 14, 1986.

27. A detailed account of the attack on Colomoncagua can be found in Canadian Church Task Force on Salvadoran and Indigenous Nicaraguan Refugees in Honduras, August 29 - September 5, 1985, Toronto (InterChurch Committee for Refugees and InterChurch Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, October 1985). See also New York Times, September 5, 7, 8, 1985.

28. Author's interviews with US State Department officials in Washington D.C., December 1985 and with Honduran government and US State Department officials in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, January 1986.
29. The author visited and stayed overnight in the camp at Colomoncagua in January 1986, and interviewed UNHCR, voluntary agency staff and Salvadoran refugees.
30. Ibid.
31. Author's interview with US State Department officials in Washington D.C., December 1985 and in Tegucigalpa, January 1986.
32. See America's Watch and the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights Honduras: A Crisis on the Border (New York, January 1985); Patricia Weiss-Fagen, Refugees and Displaced Persons in Central America (Washington D. C.: Refugee Policy Group, March 1984).
33. Author's interviews with UNHCR officials, Geneva, May 1986.
34. Minutes, ICVA Subgroup on Mexico and Central America, New York, March 3, 1986, p. 2.
35. Author's interviews at the Nicaraguan Ladino refugee camp at Teupasenti, January 1986.
36. Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Report on the Situation of Human Rights of a Segment of the Nicaraguan Population of Miskito Origin (Washington D.C.: General Secretariat, OAS, 1984); and Amnesty International, Nicaragua: The Human Rights Record (London: 1986).
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38. Author's interview with David Befus, World Relief, Tegucigalpa, January 1986.
39. Author's interview with Nicaraguan government representatives and leaders of the Moravian church, Managua, Nicaragua, January 1986.
40. Author's interviews with UNHCR officials, Tegucigalpa, Honduras and Managua, Nicaragua, January 1986.
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43. Estimates of the number of illegal immigrants inside Costa Rica vary widely. The former Minister of the Interior claimed that there were 200,000 to 250,000 illegal immigrants, but that figure is not considered reliable by many people.
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50. See Declaración de Cartagena, Coloquio Sobre La Protección Internacional de los Refugiados en América Central, México y Panamá: Problemas Jurídicos Y Humanitarios Cartagena, Colombia. November 19-22, 1984.

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