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AMERICANS IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY
IN LATIN AMERICA

October 21, 1983
(415) 479-3361

Faith Ryan Whittlesey
Assistant to the President for
Public Liaison
Washington D.C.

OCT 25 1983

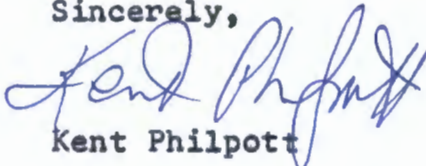
Dear Faith Ryan Whittlesey,

Thank you for your letter of October 11, and the encouragement
you have given us is appreciated.

Enclosed is a copy of the letter we prepared for the National
Bipartisan Commission on Central America so you can see the
major conclusions we reached after our visit to El Salvador.
Also, we are sending a copy of the letter to Mr. Morton Blackwell.

Best wishes to you in your work which provides help to groups like
our own here in California.

Sincerely,


Kent Philpott

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K.P.
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Oct 11th

**AMERICANS IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY
IN LATIN AMERICA**

October 18, 1983
(415) 479-3361

The Kissinger Commission
on Central America

Dear Friends,

Americans in Support of Democracy in Latin America is a non-partisan group established in January, 1983 by Geoffrey Tachet and Kent A. Philpott, the author of this letter. Mr. Tachet is a businessman and I am also in business and for sixteen years have been a Baptist minister. Although neither of us had been involved in politics before, we were concerned about the conditions in El Salvador. It seemed to us that El Salvador was in danger of being reduced to conditions that might lead to another Marxist takeover after the fashion of Nicaragua. We did not believe that the fighting in El Salvador was a civil war, but believed the "rebels" were insurgents supported and trained by other Marxists states. Our concern was to learn the facts, seek to inform others, and rally support for our government's efforts in Central America and especially El Salvador. These are the goals of our organization.

In pursuit of our goals we took advantage of free speech messages offered by the media in the San Francisco Bay Area, read everything we could get our hands on, talked to our friends, distributed broadsides, and organized a small group of people who shared our concerns. From September 13 to the 23rd of that month Mr. Tachet and I visited El Salvador on the basis of an invitation and spoke to many people from many sectors of Salvadoran life and traveled to eight of El Salvador's fourteen provinces. A summary of basic points from that trip is enclosed with this letter.

The purpose of this letter to the Kissinger Commission is to relate general concerns and conclusions based on our findings.

As you know there are three forces acting and reacting in the political environment of El Salvador. There is the left whose extreme and bulk is the guerrillas. There is the right, that, as the left has gradations including a growing group of moderates, has a radical element which conducts terrorist activities almost in competition with the leftists. Both extremes seem to act out of the fear of not having power and increasingly of the fear of being powerless. In the middle, along with some few moderate leftists and rightists, are the Christian Democrats, who happily have the primary sympathy of our own government, but, who unhappily, have become the enemy of both extremes.

We urge the continued support of the Christian Democrats by the U.S. Government. This is, of course, tactically correct and difficult all at the same time. The U.S. must maintain distance for the sake of the integrity of the Salvadoran Government, certainly, but a political party isolated in the middle needs strong support.

The Christian Democrats are concerned about providing "political space" in the government for both moderate elements of the right and the left. This stance must be encouraged. We believe that especially among the right wing political parties there are substantial elements who would like to moderate their position and cooperate with the more centrist groups. Reprisal from within their ranks prevents this. The U.S. can strengthen the political climate of El Salvador by a walk-soft policy with the right while at the same time providing reasons for the them to participate more productively in the demo-

cratic process.

Members of the right wing have been most affected by the three basic reforms instituted in 1980. These reforms were urged by our government under the Carter Administration and continued under the Reagan Administration. These reforms were vital and should be implemented with vigor. However, many elements of the right have been seriously aggrieved by the reforms. We urge the moderation of the reforms with a view to injustices visited upon those who lost much through the various expropriations and restrictions that were imposed. In many cases wealthy persons were run rough-shod over, necessarily for the most part, but these persons who could add so much to the stature of El Salvador have been radicalized by the reforms and need to be brought back into the mainstream of the life of the country. We do not mean they need to be restored to their original positions, but their complaints should be heard and any untoward injustices redressed.

We spoke to business people who were moderate politically, people who were concerned about the building up of the economy of El Salvador, people who desired to see the rise of a middle class, people who felt stifled by the banking and export reforms. It could be that the major flow of cash out of El Salvador has begun to cease and some restrictions could be lifted so that the private sector could once again freely move in an open free enterprise system. A strong economy, a growing and satisfied middle class is the best weapon against those who would exploit a weakened society. Also, foreign industry, a crucial factor in a country where there is too little land and too many people, must be diligently encouraged.

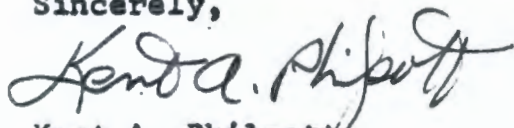
The three reforms of 1979-1980 have been of considerable value, but the blessings have been mixed. Unavoidably the cart may have been put before the horse. By the horse we refer to administrative reform. A corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy was commissioned to administer the reforms. Huge amounts of money passed through many hands and in fact continue to do so. No doubt some of this precious money does not accomplish the desired end. And little else could have been expected. Unquestionably a shake-up in the governmental and military apparatus would be a sensitive operation. It was suggested to us on several occasions that the struggle against the insurgents is being prolonged to assure the continued flow of American dollars. We have no proof that this is so, however, from many indicators it appears the raw material for victory is present within the country. We recommend the U.S. Government closely observe the military process and urge a vigorous pursuit of the situation. Of course, the problem becomes one of avoiding superimposing oneself on a fragile and critical Salvadoran administration.

This last recommendation deserves first priority and is placed here so that it may receive emphasis. We are speaking of educational reform. Perhaps "reform" is not the right word. Briefly, the educational level of the people needs to be accelerated. During the crisis of the past four years, the literacy rate has actually dropped. This unfortunate circumstance is understandable. And certainly the guerrillas have and would do anything to disrupt any educational program. Still, the effort must be made. We recommend an evaluation of the present educational efforts in El Salvador and that U.S. dollars

and teaching personnel be targeted for El Salvador and other Central American countries for the sole purpose of educating the peasants and urban poor. This would be of inestimable value to the people, but would also damage the guerrillas as much or more than bullets and bombs.

In conclusion we want to say that we are proud of our nation's commitment to the people of Central America and to the halting of Marxism in the region. This commitment must not flag or falter even though the road to the achieving of our goals is a long one. The investment in the people of Central America will reap rich rewards for them in terms of peace, freedom, and the security that comes with living in a pluralistic and democratic society.

Sincerely,



Kent A. Philpott