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PRODEMCA

Citizens' Committee for the Pro-Democratic
Forces in Central America

A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WHAT PRODEMCA BELIEVES

The friends of democracy are gaining strength in Central America, and they need and want our help.

Many in our country have too long believed that the only choice for the peoples of Central America is between traditional, authoritarian systems and a violent, repressive new revolutionary order. But during recent years it has become clear that there is a powerful desire for democracy among the peoples of this region. This aspiration is increasingly reflected in their institutions.

In El Salvador, huge numbers of citizens turned out in three elections since 1982, the last of which elected Jose Napoleon Duarte as the country's new President -- a President who has vowed to protect the rights of his people, and has taken important steps to do so.

Democracy has taken hold in Honduras, and to some extent in Panama. In these countries, and in El Salvador, the military increasingly accepts the principle of civilian government and has worked to strengthen the processes of civilian, democratic rule. Even Guatemala, which has had some harsh military regimes, has shown recent signs of progress toward democracy, including a peaceful Constituent Assembly election with a large turnout in 1984. And Costa Rica has for many years been among the few fully democratic societies outside of the industrialized world.

But many threats still cloud the prospect of progress. Poverty, illiteracy and disease are still widespread, and for some time to come will create a desperation that is easily exploited by violent and extreme forces. In some countries, remnants of the old order and its henchmen use violent and unjust means to try to retain their power. Even more dangerous is the threat from the local totalitarian left in Central America which, with Soviet and Cuban support, is now tightening its hold on Nicaragua, carrying out guerrilla and terrorist attacks in other countries of the region, and building unprecedented military forces -- greater than the combined forces of all the countries in the area.

A nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization formed in 1984 by private citizens who care about democracy, human rights and social justice in Central America.

(In Formation) Morris R. Abram, John M Bennett, Nicholas D. Biddle, Linden Blue, Francis R. Carroll*, William C. Doherty, Jr.*, Angier Biddle Duke*, J. Peter Grace, Judith Hernstadt, Sidney Hook, John T. Joyce, R. Penn Kemble*, Clark Kerr, Jorge Mas Canosa, Huber Matos, Jr., Michael Novak, Richard Ravitch*, Bayard Rustin*, Albert Shanker, John R. Silber*, Max Singer*, Kenneth B. Smilen*, Ben J. Wattenberg, Mary N. Temple, Executive Director*

**Executive Committee Member*

1901 North Fort Myer Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (703) 243-2871

We believe that the citizens of the United States have a profound moral and strategic stake in the victory of democracy in Central America. We believe that either democracy will overcome this challenge, or the region will sink back into repression and violence. If the hope for democracy is extinguished, the result will be more brutality and repression than the region has yet known. This in turn will threaten the security and the values of all Americans.

How can we best respond to these dangers? Among us there may be differing views over how our social and economic assistance to the region should be employed -- but we all agree that significant amounts of such aid are needed. There may be differences over the ways in which U.S. military assistance should be implemented -- but we agree that unless the security of these societies is defended, social and economic assistance is futile.

We all agree that the democratic forces of the region must be encouraged and assisted. For too long Americans have debated economic and military strategies while neglecting the political dimension of the problem.

It is not difficult to determine who is to be included among those democratic forces. They now include the governments of Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador and Panama, and the democratic political forces of Nicaragua. They include independent businessmen and their organizations, workers affiliated with free unions, the Roman Catholic Church and other religious groups, professional and other private sector groups. They include the political parties that have participated in democratic elections and accepted the results. These are tested opponents of totalitarianism and oligarchy. And this list is only a beginning.

WHAT PRODEMCA WILL DO

We will join the debate in the United States, which has too often been swayed by those who believe that the region is not ready for democracy, or that the United States cannot act constructively in the region.

We will distribute facts and information about the democratic struggle in the region and in specific countries. We will do this through:

- o Mail campaigns to build a grass-roots network throughout the United States to use our materials and speakers in local communities;
- o Information distribution -- pamphlets, video cassettes, educational materials, films;

- o A newsletter keeping up-to-date on relevant developments in the region, and country by country;
- o Computer network distribution of information and materials;
- o Visits by Central American leaders to speak to public gatherings, the media, the Congress and government officials, organizations and religious groups, at the national and local level; educational visits to Central America for first hand observation and study by U.S. citizens and leaders;
- o Special events -- conferences, forum meetings, teach-ins, etc.;
- o A Speakers' Bureau, making available informed spokesmen to organizations and meetings;
- o Student activities, including speakers, materials and assistance to campus groups that want to organize a program;
- o An information bank and clearinghouse to aid organizations and religious groups, researchers, students and others;
- o Special educational programs for the media, Congressional representatives and staff, government officials, and national leaders.

Strong citizens' groups are a hallmark of our democracy. Our goal is to inform and mobilize the public so that our government will stand firm for the democratic ideal.

HOW PRODEMCA WILL OPERATE

Our Committee is composed of individuals from all sectors of American life, who represent no partisan special interests. We welcome the participation of Democrats, Republicans and independents, of liberals and conservatives, of supporters and opponents of the present Administration and its policies.

All of our Council members and officers serve without pay as individuals and not as representatives of any other organizations with which they may be affiliated. PRODEMCA is completely independent of every other organization and is not connected to any government.

Our activities will be wholly financed by voluntary contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations. To ensure that PRODEMCA has a broad base of public support it will

not accept any individual contribution in excess of 10% of the Committee's total budget.

We are incorporated in the District of Columbia as an educational non-profit organization. The Internal Revenue Service has determined that we are exempt from federal income tax under section 501 (c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, so that contributions to the Committee are tax deductible; and we will be treated as a publicly supported organization, rather than a private foundation, at least during the current period (through December 31, 1985).

PRODEMCA is governed by its National Council at annual meetings. Between Council meetings the Executive Committee will be responsible for the organization and has full power to act for the Council. Members of the Council and advisory groups are consulted informally by the staff and the Executive Committee about policies and programs. PRODEMCA is a temporary organization. Our only purpose is to help Americans learn the facts about Central America so that the United States will support the pro-democratic forces in the struggle now taking place. We will continue only until our job is completed.

We call upon people from all walks of American life -- business, public affairs, education, the professions, religious groups -- to join with us in this program, to contribute generously and to carry the message to your own friends, organizations and community.

PRODEMCA

Citizens' Committee for the Pro-Democratic
Forces in Central America

National Council (in formation)

- Morris Abram, Attorney, New York
Philip Baum, Assoc. Exec. Director, American Jewish Congress
- * John M. Bennett, San Antonio, Texas
 - Nicholas D. Biddle, Madrid and San Jose, Costa Rica
 - Linden Blue, Chairman, Cordillera Corporation, Denver, Colorado
 - Vladimir Bukovsky, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California
 - * Francis R. Carroll, President, Small Business Service Bureau
 - S. Harrison Dogole, Businessman, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 - * William C. Doherty, Jr., Executive Director, American Institute
for Free Labor Development
 - * Angier Biddle Duke, Chairman, Appeal of Conscience Foundation,
former Ambassador to El Salvador
 - Orville Freeman, Chairman, Business International, former Secretary
of Agriculture, former Governor of Minnesota
 - J. Peter Grace, Chairman, W. R. Grace & Company
 - Judith Hernstadt, Las Vegas, Nevada
 - Theodore M. Hesburgh, President, University of Notre Dame
 - Sidney Hook, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California
 - Samuel P. Huntington, Director, The Center for International
Affairs, Harvard University
 - John T. Joyce, President, International Union of Bricklayers
and Allied Craftsmen
 - * Penn Kemble, President, Foundation for Democratic Education
 - Clark Kerr, President Emeritus, University of California
 - Jorge Mas Canosa, Chairman, Cuban-American National Foundation
 - Huber Matos, Jr., Cuba, Independiente y Democratica
 - Michael Novak, American Enterprise Institute
 - * Richard Ravitch, Chairman, City Development Corporation, Inc.
 - Daniel Rose, President, Rose Associates, New York
 - * Bayard Rustin, President, A. Philip Randolph Institute
 - Albert Shanker, President, American Federation of Teachers
 - * John R. Silber, President, Boston University; member National
Bipartisan Commission on Central America
 - William E. Simon, President, Olin Foundation, former Secretary
of the Treasury
 - * Max Singer, President, The Potomac Organization
 - * Kenneth B. Smilen, Chairman, Smilen & Safian
 - Maurice Sonnenberg, Investment Consultant, New York
 - Ben J. Wattenberg, Chairman, Coalition for Democratic Majority
 - Elie Wiesel, Author, Professor in Humanities, Boston University
 - * Mary N. Temple, Executive Director, PRODEMCA
- * Member of the Executive Committee

(All affiliations are for identification purposes only.)

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democracy, human rights and social justice in Central America.*

(In Formation) Morris R. Abram, John M. Bennett*, Nicholas D. Biddle, Linden Blue, Francis R. Carroll*, William C. Doherty, Jr., Angier Biddle Duke*,
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**Executive Committee Member*

1901 North Fort Myer Drive, Arlington, Virginia 22209 (703) 243-2871

**FRIENDS OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER IN CENTRAL AMERICA
(PRODEMCA)**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

WHAT WE BELIEVE

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In El Salvador, huge numbers of citizens turned out in four elections since 1982. They elected Jose Napoleon Duarte as the country's new President — a President who has vowed to protect the rights of his people and has taken important steps to do so.

Democracy has taken a firm hold in Honduras. As in El Salvador, the military increasingly accepts the principle of civilian government and has worked to strengthen the processes of civilian, democratic rule. Even Guatemala, which has had some harsh military regimes, has made substantial progress toward democracy. And Costa Rica has for many years been among the few fully democratic societies outside of the industrialized world.

But many threats still cloud the prospect of progress. Poverty, illiteracy and disease are still widespread, and for some time to come will create a desperation that is easily exploited by violent and extreme forces. In some countries, remnants of the old order use violent and unjust means to try to retain their power. Even more dangerous is the threat from the totalitarian left: in Central America which, with Soviet and Cuban support, is now tightening its hold on Nicaragua, carrying out guerrilla and terrorist attacks in other countries of the region, and building unprecedented military forces.

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- Pamphlets, articles, educational materials, films;

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- Press conferences and briefings on current developments and issues of timely interest and concern;
- Visits by Central American leaders to speak to public gatherings, the media, the Congress and government officials, organizations and religious groups, at the national and local level;
- Visits to Central America for first hand observation and study by U.S. citizens and leaders who talk and write about their experiences in their communities, organizations and the media;
- Special events -- conferences, forum meetings, teach-ins;
- A Speakers' Bureau, making available informed spokesmen to organizations, churches, schools and universities;
- Special briefings for the media, organizations, Congressional representatives and staff, government officials, and national leaders.

Strong citizens' groups are a hallmark of our democracy. Our goal is to inform and mobilize the public so that our government will stand firm for the democratic ideal.

HOW WE OPERATE

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We are governed by the National Council at annual meetings. Between Council meetings the Executive Committee is responsible for the organization and has full power to act for the Council. Members of the Council are consulted informally by the staff and the Executive Committee about policies and programs.

We call upon people from all walks of life — business, labor, public affairs, education, the professions, religious groups — to join with us in this program, to contribute generously and to carry the message to your own friends, organizations and community.

Friends of the Democratic Center
In Central American (Prodemca)

729 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 950
Washington, D.C. 20005

Send me more information

I would like to help in my community

I enclose \$ _____ for the program. Contributions are tax deductible under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Name _____

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INVESTMENT CONSULTANT, NEW YORK
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ACTRESS
BEN J. WATTENBERG
COALITION FOR DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY
ELIE WIESEL
AUTHOR
MARY N. TEMPLE*
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

* Member of the Executive Committee
(All affiliations are for identification
purposes only.)

729 15th STREET, N.W., SUITE 950, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005

202/347-1006



*Belk
call him up
apt. Tues. 2:00
after 5 PM*

File

April 23, 1984

PRODEMCA

Mr. Marshall Breger
2401 H Street, NW
Apt. 311
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Marshall,

Here is the material on PRODEMCA.

It was good to meet you, even briefly, in Faith's office. Please call me when you have a chance to talk, or let me know when it would be convenient for me to come in to see you. I think we need to get more Jewish presence on the group.

One way to start might be to get some people to go down to see the election in El Salvador for themselves on May 6. It will be a tremendous experience and only requires \$1,000 tax- deductible and 54 hours - Miami to Miami. (Leave noon Saturday May 6 and return Monday at 6 P.M.) The description, program, etc. are enclosed.

Best regards,

Max
Max Singer

Vicki Thomas

*apt. arranged for:
May 2, 5:15 here*

Prodemca - 6 -
held for under 1/8
Simón

HOW SALVADORAN ELECTIONS LOOK AND FEEL TO AMERICANS WHO SEE FOR THEMSELVES

REPORT OF THE CITIZEN OBSERVER GROUP AT THE
SALVADORAN ELECTION



*Poll watchers from the two competing parties on election day,
May 6, 1984, in northwestern El Salvador.*

PRODEMCA
JULY 1984

Arrangements for the Citizen Observer Group to see the Salvadoran election were made by the Citizens' Committee for the Pro-Democratic Coalition in Central America (PRODEMCA). PRODEMCA announced that anyone who wanted to go (and who could pay a share of the cost) was welcome. PRODEMCA publicized the opportunity to observe the elections through a wide variety of organizations, through radio and press announcements, and through direct mailings to hundreds of Americans.

The twenty-five people who responded to PRODEMCA's announcements traveled to El Salvador under the auspices of PRODEMCA but not as its representatives. Their participation in the PRODEMCA-organized trip should not be understood as endorsement of PRODEMCA's position on the conflict in Central America.

PRODEMCA Who We Are and What We Stand For

We are a completely independent and nonpartisan group of citizens who have come together because we share a belief that the United States should stand for democracy, human rights, and social justice in Central America.

At a time when our country is deeply divided about many issues raised by the conflict south of our border,

we have joined together in this Committee to express our unity on some fundamental issues of fact and values. We ourselves are divided on many questions, but we feel strongly about the importance of some critical points on which we think most Americans can agree.

In brief, our position is that there is a life-or-death struggle now taking place between two groups in Central America. One side is committed to democracy, to human rights, and to social progress; the other is anti-democratic and believes that the program of an "enlightened vanguard" is more important than human rights. We believe that if the United States is to have a decent regard for the needs and wishes of the people of Central America, we must continue to support the pro-democratic side in this struggle.

PRODEMCA will take no position on the nature or amount of U.S. aid to the members of the pro-democratic coalition, nor on whether it should be conditional, nor on specific diplomatic proposals, nor on any specific legislation or candidates. PRODEMCA condemns death squads of every political persuasion and favors effective action to prevent killings and other deprivations of basic human rights.

PRODEMCA is incorporated in the District of Columbia as an educational nonprofit organization and is organized and will operate to meet the requirements of section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, so that contributions to the Committee are tax-deductible.

The following trip report was written by the PRODEMCA staff and does not necessarily represent the views of the participants in the PRODEMCA El Salvador Election observer group. The statement written by the observers themselves follows the trip report.

Trip report of the Citizen Observer Group to the Salvadoran Runoff Election for President

Twenty-five Americans traveled together to El Salvador at their own expense in order to observe the runoff election for President of that country. The group included Democrats and Republicans, a former ambassador, college professors and a college student—men and women of ages ranging from 21 to 75. Some traveled as representatives of Catholic and Protestant organizations, some were sent by nonprofit foundations, and some were traveling at their own initiative.

All the people in the Citizen Observer Group had been following the Central American conflict and had preconceptions about what they would see based mostly on what they had read and seen in the media. And all of them returned to the United States profoundly concerned because they found that what they saw with their own eyes and heard from the Salvadoran people they spoke with bore little resemblance to what the American media had led them to expect.

Because of all they had heard and because they were all aware that elections in Central America have in the past often been corrupt affairs characterized by massive fraud and intimidation, the observers went out to the polls suspicious of what they would be told by officials and doubtful that voters would be willing to speak openly. They were watching for even subtle signs of the continuation in the present of the corruption of the past, or of voters whose words would reflect their fears rather than their feelings.

The observers found that they had had three misconceptions about (i) the quality of the electoral process, (ii) the spirit of the voters, and (iii) the meaning of the elections.

ON THE QUALITY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS:

PRECONCEPTION: The clear plastic boxes into which the voters put their ballots opened the door to intimidation of voters and made “a mockery of the secret ballot.”

OBSERVATION: The vast majority of the ballots were folded so that it was impossible to see which party symbol had been marked.

None of the twenty-five observers ever saw anyone, in or out of uniform, standing near the ballot boxes, or “urnas,” watching how people were voting (let alone putting the names of those who voted the “wrong way” on blacklists, or death lists). Those Salvadorans who did not take the care to fold their ballots well enough to be unreadable were simply not bothering to use an available precaution against a nonexistent threat. Some of the PRO-DEMCA observers even saw ballots (some cast for each party) which had been folded by voters with the obvious intention of having their choice clearly visible. Where there are no “malicious intimidators,” in the words of one of the observers, “there is no need to behave as if there are.” The observers agreed that the few ballots which were readable through the sides of the box were evidence of the absence of intimidation at the polls, not of its presence.

PRECONCEPTION: The fact that voting is mandatory in El Salvador, with severe punishment for some non-voters, would mean that a large turnout at the elections was no more meaningful than the almost 100% turnout for

Soviet elections.

OBSERVATION: While some of the hundreds of Salvadorans with whom the observers spoke said that they were voting because it was the law to vote, the vast majority said they were voting because they felt the candidate of the party they favored would bring peace to their country. It also turns out that not a single non-voter has ever had to pay for his inaction. The fines simply have not been enforced in any of the three elections since 1979.

PRECONCEPTION: The voting process in El Salvador, with its electoral register, indelible ink, and identification cards would be so complex that the portion of El Salvador's population which is illiterate would in fact be excluded from the vote.



A ballot.

OBSERVATION: The voting process was not an great obstacle to the illiterate. The key part of the electoral process, the marking of the ballot, involved only putting a mark through the party symbol of the voter's choice (the white fish on the green background of the Christian Democrats and the cross on a red white and blue field of the ARENA symbol are as well known in El Salvador as the golden arches of McDonald's are here). For those parts of the electoral process which were more complex, help was always available from the droves of poll-watchers from the two parties who were eager to see as many people vote as possible.

The complexity of the 1984 elections lay in the electoral register which limited the number of places where each Salvadoran could choose to vote. Out of over 5,000 urnas, the voter could choose only one of those fifteen which were accompanied by a voter list which carried his name.

The first of these was at the place where the voter's "cedula," or identification card, had been issued. The other fourteen were backup lists in the capitals of each of El Salvador's fourteen districts which prevented voters away from their home towns from being excluded from the vote. Voters had to check the newspaper to find which urna had been assigned to their cedula number. At no polling place visited by the observers in the PRODEMCA group was there ever any shortage of newspapers or of people offering help to those who could not figure out where to vote. And, even if there had been a newspaper shortage or the voter had forgotten which urna to approach, it would still be possible to find out where to vote by looking at the urnas themselves. Each was clearly marked with the cedula numbers which were assigned to it.

ON THE SPIRIT OF THE VOTERS AND THE ATMOSPHERE AT THE POLLS:

PRECONCEPTION: The Salvadoran elections would take place in a "climate of fear." Being in El Salvador would be hardly less dangerous than being in Beirut.

OBSERVATION: The "climate" at the polls has been described by members of the observer group as that of a "festival," and as being "like small towns in the U.S. on the 4th of July." All the observers said that they felt safe. By the time they left the country, they laughed at the image of San Salvador as a city under siege.

The observers had traveled around El Salvador in eight cars, each with the freedom to choose both its own route and which polls to visit. While the cars traveled only in the western half of the country, the areas which they vis-



An hour before the polls opened at a San Salvador polling place on election day, May 6, 1984.

ited hold close to two-thirds of El Salvador's population. Everywhere they went the observers reported seeing parents bringing their children to the polling places and vendors selling soft drinks and flavored ices to the lines of voters. It is not difficult to tell if a crowd of people is happy with or burdened by what they are doing. The mood of the crowds on May 6th was cheerful and positive even after many people had stood on line for three hours in the sun.

PRECONCEPTION: The presence of members of the Salvadoran Armed Forces at the polling places would be a source of voter intimidation.

OBSERVATION: Because the ballots were cast in secret, with no members of the military watching how people voted at any of the dozens of polling places visited by the small groups of PRODEMCA observers, the presence of the military cannot be said to have influenced the voters' choice of parties.

The twenty-five observers agreed that intimidation from the military was not only absent but also impossible, given the presence of poll watchers from both parties at every voting table. Because the poll watchers had the power to reject, at the time of the counting of the ballots, votes which they felt had not been freely cast, the military could not get away with intimidation had that been their goal. In fact, however, the observers saw no reason to believe that members of the military ever even tried to tilt the vote toward either candidate. Soldiers were under strict orders from their commander-in-chief not to vote and, so far as we could tell, none did. This command was so closely followed that the PRODEMCA observers who tried to convince soldiers to tell them which party they favored were completely unsuccessful—even when they caught an individual soldier alone and promised that his words would be off the record, they could not get him to admit even *hypothetically* which party he favored.

PRECONCEPTION: Salvadorans would resent the ubiquitous presence of soldiers at the polls.

OBSERVATION: None of the observers saw any indication, subtle or direct, that the presence of the Armed Forces at the polls was felt by Salvadorans to be motivated by anything other than the need for security.

A number of the PRODEMCA observers, when they asked civilians standing in line at the polls what they thought about soldiers being denied the vote, were surprised by the answers they received. Some voters said they thought it unfair to deny the thousands of citizens who happen to be in uniform the right to have a share in choosing their commander-in-chief. But the most surprising answer came from some of those Salvadorans who did not regret the soldiers' requirement not to vote—"of course they shouldn't vote, they're busy guarding us."

PRECONCEPTION: The "Democratic Process" in El Salvador is little more than a creation of those forces in the United States who want to see military aid to El Salva-

dor approved. The huge lines of voters will be a sign of intimidation rather than of grass-roots support for the electoral process.

OBSERVATION: All the observers found that the Salvadorans whom they saw and met were voting for their own country and for their own welfare rather than out of concern for American strategic interests.

The feeling among the observers was that the Salvadorans who went out to vote did so enthusiastically. "Why else would they get on line a whole hour before the polls opened?" one observer asked. One of the clearest indications of that enthusiasm was the number of people who devoted the whole of May 6th to working at the polls. There were over thirty thousand poll workers—at each of the approximately 6,000 urnas there was the three-person electoral "committee" as well as at least two "vigilantes," wearing either the green aprons of the Christian Democrats or the red, white and blue ones of the ARENA party, plus many other vigilantes and supervisors.

PRECONCEPTION: The hatred felt by the two candidates for each other that is so obvious any time either



A Salvadoran woman has her finger marked with indelible dye after voting on May 6, 1984.

candidate speaks is so great that the tension between supporters of the two parties at the polls will be near the breaking point. Given that hatred, cooperation between the parties will be unlikely.

OBSERVATION: The hatred which exists between the candidates disappeared at the polling places—an observation which is especially amazing given the fact that many voters and vigilantes seemed convinced that without the victory of their party, El Salvador was doomed.

At every polling table in the country there were people from the two parties working together closely and peacefully for a very long day. The party members at the polls were committed to only one thing more than their own parties—the fairness of the election. They all realized that the validity of their party's victory would be challenged if the elections were less than perfect, and they all seemed to believe that their party would win.

A few of the observers in the group reported that they were in the largest polling place in El Salvador at six in the evening just as the polls closed—the national fairground. At exactly six o'clock the power failed and the lights went out. Within seconds, they said, hundreds of flashlights flicked on, and everyone moved away from the ballot boxes. Then two people, one from each party, rested their elbows on the top of each box and shined a flashlight inside so that nobody could claim that the darkness had been taken advantage of as an opportunity to stuff the ballot boxes. They said that they saw some of the party workers actually lock arms around the boxes.

While there were stories about fights breaking out at one polling place between the vigilantes of the two parties, none of the PRODEMCA observers reported seeing anything more violent than heated but civil debate where they went.

ON THE MEANING OF THE SALVADORAN ELECTION:

PRECONCEPTION: No matter how long the lines are at the polls, an election in a country where a civil war is

going on (and only one side of that war is on the ballot) will not be a very meaningful measure of the popular will.

OBSERVATION: The observers found only the most sporadic indications that the absence of an FMLN/FDR (the guerrillas' organization and its political representatives) party symbol was missed by the Salvadoran people. The observers in the group who watched the vote count in the evening reported that all but a few of the ballots they saw had been cast for one of the two parties—some of them were surprised by this because they had expected to see more of the blank and defaced ballots which have always been the accepted way for voters to say that they dislike all the choices on a ballot. One observer said she saw one ballot on which the words "they're both killers" had been written.

CONCLUSION:

A couple of the observers from the PRODEMCA group came up with the best explanation of the meaning of the Salvadoran election so far. They said that the people who cast votes for the Christian Democrats felt Duarte could best bring peace to El Salvador and that the people who marked the ARENA symbol felt that D'Aubuisson could best bring peace to El Salvador. The fact that more PDC symbols than ARENA ones had been marked, they explained, meant that more people wanted Duarte than D'Aubuisson to be El Salvador's President. They said that those people who cast null ballots, or no ballots, rather than votes for one of the two parties could be considered to be dissatisfied with the candidates or the electoral process and that some fraction—perhaps even most—of those people could even be supporters of the guerrillas.

What the observers said was self-evident. But sometimes the obvious has to be pointed out if it is to escape from the fog of over-analysis. By finally saying the obvious, the members of the citizen observer group of the runoff presidential election in El Salvador are making a contribution as fundamental as that of the boy who finally said, "The Emperor has no clothes!"

Statement of the PRODEMCA El Salvador Election Observer Group

May 7, 1984

We are 25 Americans who responded to an opportunity to come as private citizens at our own expense to see the Salvadoran elections for ourselves. We include Democrats, Republicans and independents, supporters and opponents of President Reagan's reelection. We speak for ourselves, not for any organization.

We want to express our appreciation for the hospitality we received from Salvadorans everywhere we went. Our credentials as non-governmental observers made us welcome everywhere we wanted to go.

We will comment only on what we saw and the facts that we have evidence to support. We will not speak about specific policy questions because they depend on much more than the facts we learned. And we certainly take no position on the Salvadorans' choice between their two candidates.

Before starting, we want to say that what we saw made us proud of our country: first by the demonstration that the Salvadoran people share our democratic faith; and second because four million of our tax dollars helped to make the arrangements for this successful election possible. The money could not have been better spent.

The following observations apply to what we were able to see ourselves. We went in eight cars, each with an interpreter and each choosing its own route. We covered the areas of the country where most of the people live, small towns and big cities. We believe that the dozens of polling places we observed, and the hundreds of voters we talked to were reasonably representative of most of the country. But of course we didn't see everything; many

things could have happened that we didn't see.

1. For us it is beyond doubt that this was a free and fair election, a shining example of the democratic spirit of which the Salvadorans are justly proud.

2. It was clearly the whole Salvadoran community turning out in an enthusiastic expression of national spirit. The atmosphere was like small towns in the U.S. on the 4th of July, with families bringing the children along.

3. We saw no indications that people were voting because of intimidation or because the law required it. On the contrary, all the signs, subtle as well as direct, were that people voted because they had decided that it was their duty to do so as part of their commitment to democracy and to achieve peace.

4. The imperfections we saw were technical and inconsequential, neither one-sided nor substantial.

5. We were amazed at the number and spirit of the young people working at the polling places, over 30,000 altogether. They worked hard and with good spirit between the parties that was very good-hearted.

6. It was clear that the Army was committed to having free competitive elections. They worked hard providing effective security and they were neutral.

7. The people believed that the Army supported a free election. The people, the government, and the Army all saw themselves as working together in a common strong commitment to a government based on free and competitive elections.

8. The voters knew that the guerrillas rejected the elections—and they overwhelmingly rejected the guerrillas' po-

sition on this issue. We saw no indication that many people wanted to have an opportunity to vote for the guerrillas or their political representatives. In the places where we saw the couont, the number of null votes—an accepted way of expressing support for the guerrillas—was below the 10% level of the March election.

Conclusion: We came to see for ourselves, and on two major issues we found things very different than what most people we talked to at home believe.

A. Our friends thought we were brave—or crazy—to go to such a “dangerous” place. We felt safe. The Salvadorans were out with their children, so they felt safe. Undoubtedly there is violence and danger somewhere in

El Salvador. But we can testify that there are large areas which are peaceful and feel safe.

B. All kinds of doubt have been cast on Salvadoran elections—as propaganda, a climate of fear, etc., etc. These doubts are wrong. The Salvadoran elections are first-class free elections.

We must ask whether the process by which Americans try to inform themselves about El Salvador is so great a failure on other matters as well.

Finally, we strongly believe that to be true to ourselves, our country must support El Salvador so that its brave commitment to government based on free elections is not defeated by those now attacking it.

The following is a list of those who participated in the election observer trip:

Steve Allen	Anniston, Alabama	Joachim Maitre	Boston, Massachusetts
John Bennett, Jr.	San Antonio, Texas	Mihajlo Mihajlov	Columbus, Ohio
Francis Carroll	Worcester, Massachusetts	John Miller	Chicago, Illinois
Shari Cohn	Laurel, Maryland	Sister Camilla Mullay	Columbus, Ohio
Paul Dietrich	Washington, D. C.	Barbara Perkins	New York, New York
Angier Biddle Duke	New York, New York	William D. Sindlinger	Cedar Falls, Iowa
Peter Flaherty	Washington, D. C.	William W. Sindlinger	Cedar Falls, Iowa
Daniel James	Washington, D. C.	Alex Singer	Ithaca, New York
Harry T. Johnson	Medway, Massachusetts	Max Singer	Chevy Chase, Maryland
Roger Kaplan	New York, New York	Kenneth Smilen	New York, New York
Penn Kemble	Washington, D. C.	Mary Temple	New York, New York
Phillip Lawler	Washington, D. C.	Vicki Thomas	Bethesda, Maryland
		Esther Wilson	Washington, D. C.

App.: Comparison of Vote Totals Three Elections

	ELECTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTIES			PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS					
	1982			March 1984			May 1984 *		
	votes	% of valid	% of total	votes	% of valid	% of total	votes	% of valid	% of total
P.D.C.	546,218	40	35	549,727	43	39	752,625	54	49
ARENA	402,304	30	26	376,917	30	27	651,741	46	43
Other Parties	413,817	30	27	334,632	27	24	--	--	--
Total Valid	1,362,339	100	88	1,266,276	100	89	1,404,366	100	92
Invalid	131,498		8	104,557		7	81,017		5
Blank	51,438		3	41,736		3	32,582		2
Chal- lenged	6,412		0	6,924		0	6,114		0
Total Invalid	189,348		12	153,217		11	119,713		8
TOTAL	1,551,687		100	1,419,493		100	1,524,079		100

Figures rounded to the nearest whole percent

* Provisional results as of May 11, 1984 with 96.08% of the vote counted.

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* Member of the Executive Committee

**Chairman of the Executive Committee

Suite 202
1901 North Fort Myer Drive
Arlington, Va. 22209
703-243-2557