

Senator David Durenberger
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

5/4/84

Dear Senator Durenberger,

It is a good thing for the country that you have taken time to learn first-hand the seriousness of the problems of Latin America and that you have tried to bring reason and purpose to our policy toward that area. I appreciate this and the time you took for your thoughtful response to my letter.

We are in substantial agreement, although I do disagree that we should support the cntras. We can't undo the past and most of them represent the hated regime we fixed on Nicaragua. Supporting them in any way alienates not the present government as much as most Nicaraguans and we can accomplish nothing that way.

While I do not believe that the coming elections in Honduras and El Salvador can or will have the results you anticipate, at this point in your remarks of the 26th you correctly and succinctly state what our hope should be, that "genuinely representative governments . . . can evolve(d) over time into full-fledged democracies..."

There is no way we can impose this growth on those countries and if they are to evolve full-fledged democracies we must suffer each to do this in its own way as it sees its way. We must not intervene politically or economically because if we do we will drive them into other hands. If we leave them alone they will grow into what we can accept as democratic governments. No people wants any kind of dictatorship, of either extreme. But if we require them to look elsewhere for assistance we leave them no real choice. We've made this mistake too often. If we keep repeating it we assure the opposite of the hope you expressed so clearly.

Their poverty and lack of capital may lead them to some economic policies that differ from ours but we find, for example, that some state ownership in countries like England and France are no barrier to friendship with us.

We revolted against England, but does it have a better friend today, or has it had a better friend since then?

As long as we arm them we prepare them for dictatorships. Nobody will invade them if we state we will prevent it. And they can't afford their military.

We damage our own interests by any kind of intervention, in those countries, in the rest of Latin America and throughout the world.

If we let each country take its own road and provide the help each desperately needs we will have earned and will hold their friendship and support. We will have their respect, that of the rest of the world, and our own.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
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Frederick, MD 21701



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April 27, 1984

Mr. Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Maryland 21701

Dear Harold:

Thank you for your interesting and detailed letter regarding your experiences in and observations on Central America.

I found your description of your participation in the postwar conferences on Latin America to be quite enlightening. Clearly, American policy in Latin America could be characterized by alternating cycles of panic and neglect. Unfortunately, we are now experiencing the results of these policies. As you point out, one of the key problems in Central America is that you cannot make policy unless the American people understand and support it. People don't put blind faith in Presidents on war and peace issues unless they are told all the facts. President Reagan has thus far failed in this respect.

Throughout the past several years, I have tried to bring reason and purpose to our foreign policy towards Central America. Because of my own travels to the region, I knew first-hand how serious the problems were and how urgently change was needed. I encouraged Presidents Carter and Reagan to support economic reforms and improvements in human rights. I continually prodded the Congress to play a positive role in shaping our foreign policy. I strongly believe that the United States has a responsibility to play a constructive role in this vital region. I believe that the bi-partisan Kissinger Commission has articulated a long-term strategy for resolving these problems. We must be prepared to assist Central American nations for a long time after the fighting ceases by providing economic assistance and moral support.

The recent revelations regarding the mining of Nicaraguan harbors left Congress faced with a new issue: whether that tactic was a sensible means of pressuring the Nicaraguan government. I concluded that it was unwise. It affected the ships of friendly countries; it harmed civilian cargoes, as well as military ones; and it led our government into the public relations fiasco of running away from a World Court that is usually a strong supporter of Western values. I therefore joined 83 of my colleagues in voting to recommend that the President stop all such mining, even though I remain convinced that we should not cut off the Nicaraguan contras.

Mr. Harold Weisberg
April 27, 1984
Page Two

To summarize, I feel that it would be wise for the Reagan Administration to carefully outline its goals and clarify its intentions with regard to its latest actions in Central America. I thought that you might be interested in a statement on Central America which I made on the Senate floor yesterday. I hope that you find it interesting and informative.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



Dave Durenberger
United States Senator

Enclosure
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