

I worked closely with the *Southern California Interfaith Taskforce on Central America*.

Mary Brent Wherli is one of the many great people I met and came to love during that period.

B.B.

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# Letters to The Times

# El Salvador and Nicaragua

Your editorial "Salvador Peace Glimmer" (Sept. 20) was right on the money—as long as U.S. aid continues to flow unrestricted to those who do not want to make peace in El Salvador the prospects for peace will be dim.

Your stance is articulately supported by Kenneth Sharpe who explained that the Salvadoran military "continuing a war that is personally profitable and paid for with the lives of junior officers and forcibly enlisted draftees is preferable to giving up their historic power and privilege—as long, that is, as the United States foots the bill" (Op-Ed Page, Sept. 22).

Sharpe thus supports your conclusion, "No peace plan will work in El Salvador unless the generals and colonels support it. And they are unlikely to cooperate unless their North American paymasters insist on it."

That puts the ball in our court. It is up to each of us to contact our congressional representatives and help them see the light . . . the glimmer that will grow and surely bring peace if not smothered by U.S. taxpayer dollars to the Salvadoran military.

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A common sense reading of Sharpe's analysis of the "El Salvador question" should suffice to expose the harsh reality of Washington's strategy.

If 70% of the Salvadoran population, "though largely sympathetic to the insurgent's reformist aims," have not given them the support needed for an outright victory, it is precisely because of the internal terror practiced by the Salvadoran military and death squads. This terror is the only answer allowed by the Salvadoran oligarchy, thus making a political solution impossible. In fact, members of the Arena party have talked openly about a "final solution."

Everyone knows this, including Secretary of State James Baker and President Bush. If they do not force political concessions from the Arena government, they are clearly giving the Salvadoran military and death squads time to implement their worst and most brutal plans. If there is another *matanza* (massacre), as in 1932, Washington will (again) be able to wring its hands and deplore the regretful, but apparently unavoidable, tragedy.

Unfortunately, Sharpe himself has missed the "really important question:" Given America's overwhelming military might in this hemisphere; given our overwhelming economic power; given our much-vaunted moral superiority; given U.S. corporate interests in doing business with communist Russia and China; given the appeal of U.S. cultural values to the overwhelming majority of Latin Americans; why is it necessary for us always to support brutal dictatorships rather than accepting and doing business with leftist governments in this hemisphere?

Don't look to Washington for the answer.

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