

Editorial

El Salvador offers justice for a price: \$61 million in aid

It appears that the Salvadoran government is getting ready to sacrifice five national guardsmen for \$61 million in American military aid.

The five are accused of acting alone in the murders of four American churchwomen in El Salvador on Dec. 2, 1980. The women were found raped and shot in the Salvadoran backwoods, after leaving the Salvadoran international airport. Their white van was stopped by three uniformed guardsmen who forced the women to drive to the murder scene where Sgt. Luis Colindres Aleman and four other former guardsmen were waiting.

It took an outraged American public and five months before the guardsmen were arrested, and it took another 19 months before their case came to trial.

Last Monday, Salvadoran Judge Bernardo Rauda Murcia said there appeared to be enough evidence to convict the five for the murders and satisfy the American cries for justice.

The big question is why would the Salvadoran government, which failed to recognize that a crime had been committed in the first place, hurry along the convictions of these five guardsmen?

One reason could be the \$61 million in military aid. It is waiting to be delivered to El Salvador on the condition that there is a successful prosecution for the murders. This is quite an incentive to complete the trial.

Another reason for a quick conviction could be the evidence cropping up outside the courtroom that points a finger at a Salvadoran legislator and a prominent businessman.

The Salvadoran court has refused to accept the testimony of another former guard who said he overheard Colindres Aleman say he was "acting under superior

orders" when he and the other guardsmen killed the women.

Still another source has linked the chauffeur of businessman Hans Christ to the murders. The chauffeur was seen driving a red pickup truck near the murder scene the same time the women were killed. This same source claims to have heard Christ, who has been implicated in two other murders, threaten to kill the women.

These latest accusations begin to involve some top former national guard officers close to both Christ and Roberto d'Aubuisson, a former national guard major who now leads El Salvador's Legislature.

When this evidence is added to the case, there exists reasonable doubt that the murderers acted alone in the killings. The evidence tends to hint at some type of cover-up.

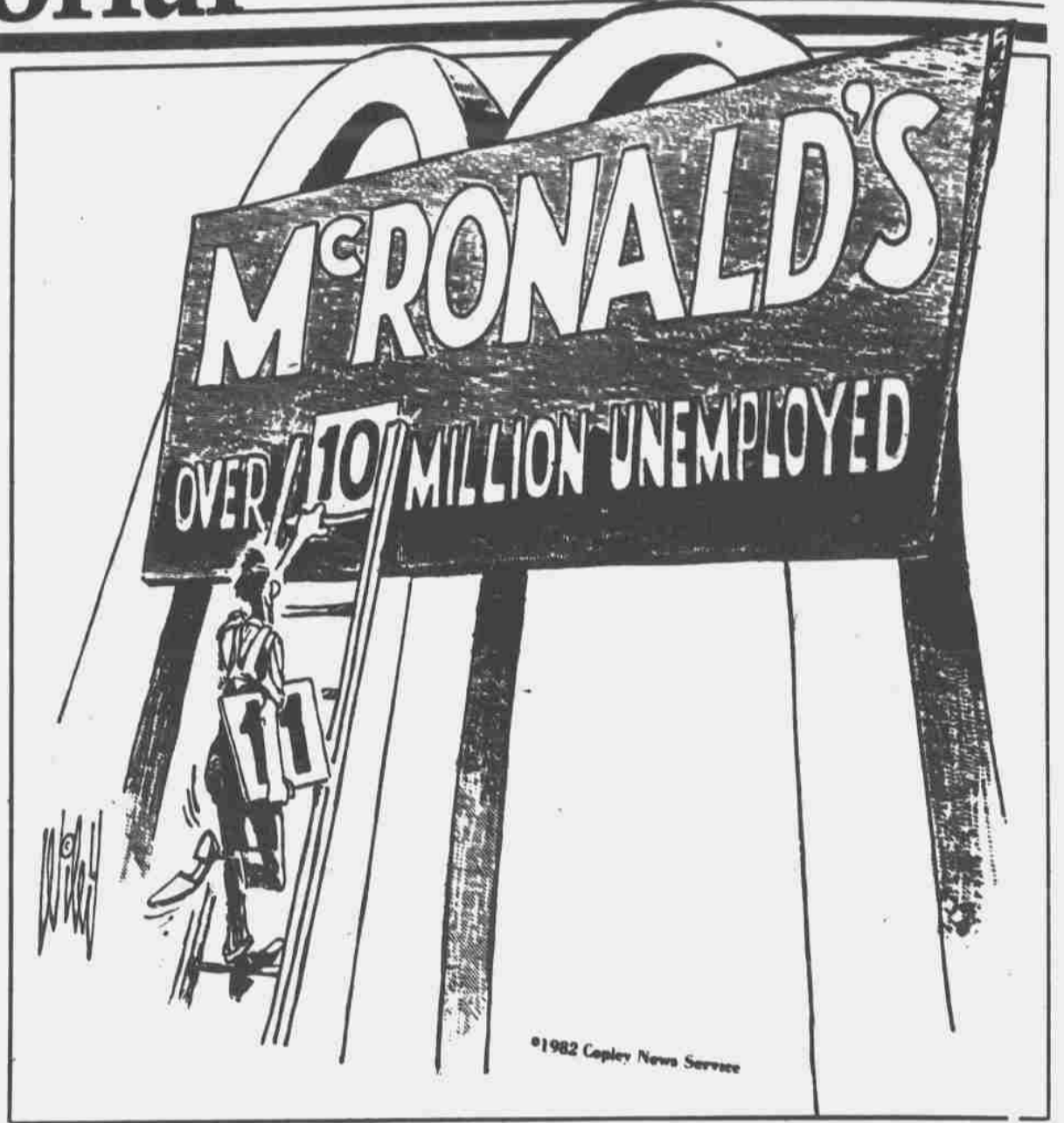
After reviewing this case, one tends to question the honesty of the Salvadoran government in not pursuing these additional leads in the trial.

Their honesty is an important point, not only in this trial but also in the fragile relationship they have with the United States. El Salvador cannot afford a scandal at this point when aid from this country is beginning to trickle once again into the country.

The reason this aid was restored in the first place was because El Salvador adopted a land reform program that will redistribute the country's farmland. They also agreed to recognize the U.S. Human Rights Policy.

But knowing that these politicians may be involved in the murders of the churchwomen, one has to question whether they will carry out their promised political reforms.

Melinda Norris



Letters policy

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available in the newspaper.

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Submit all material to the Daily Nebraskan, Room 34, Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588.

Democrats fail to stage palace coup in elections

Now just a minute.

Hardly three weeks have passed since midterm elections that were widely regarded as a mixed bag. But the casual extra-terrestrial guest — dropping in and picking up the nearest newspaper — might understandably conclude that the Democrats had just staged a palace coup.



Ross Mackenzie

Here's everybody's caricature of a congressman, Mr. Tip, proclaiming the elections "a disastrous defeat for the president." Here's everybody's favorite editorial page of the leftist fringe, The New York Times, thankfully pronouncing the elections to be proof that "liberal" is no longer a dirty word." Here are everybody's favorite political kooks — George McGovern and John Anderson (remember them?) — examining the election returns the way ancient gurus used to examine chicken bones cast on

the ground, and finding in them good signs for going for the presidential gold one more time.

And behold the suddenly trendy political issues. "Demands" for public-works jobs. "Demands" for a nuclear freeze. An utterly serious "demand" from House Armed Services Committee chairman Joseph Addabbo, a New York Democrat, that we "terminate a couple of big-ticket weapons systems." "Demands" for canceling next July's scheduled tax cut, for hiking payroll taxes as the "only" way to salvage Social Security, and for more than doubling the federal gasoline tax (from 4 cents per gallon to 9) as the "only" way to save the nation's roads.

Even Ronald Reagan is joining the chorus. Regarding the gasoline tax proposal, for instance, he's re-examining his position — suggesting that if we'll just call it a "user fee" he might go along with it, as he concluded over the summer that the biggest tax increase in U.S. history was OK if we would just call it a "revenue enhancement." Six weeks ago the president said that for the White House to support an increase in the gasoline tax there would have to be "a palace coup."

If I recall correctly, it wasn't long ago that Reagan him-

self was saying, in effect, that he had staged a palace coup — the Reagan Revolution. Indeed, during this year's campaigns he repeatedly called upon the voters to "stay the course." If the Republicans and their president now are to set about accommodating the Democrats, then perhaps we need a palace coup again.

The depletion of liberal Democratic ideas is so severe that this year the Democrats often conducted filthy campaigns. They stayed away from issues whenever they could. They concentrated on the alleged shortcomings of their Republican opponents. And at every opportunity they screamed that the Republicans are determined to junk Social Security.

Yet with the elections over, the Democrats have seized the rhetorical initiative with a vengeance. Why, you might think the main message from the election returns was that practically every voter is begging the Washington pols. "Please, please, raise my taxes!" And the Republicans — the pitiful, pitiable Republicans — seem at risk of mimicking the Democrats' tried agenda being marketed as a basketful of dramatically new ideas.

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Ballot-box bedside manner offers only a quick fix

In the middle of the kitchen table in Ted Chabasinski's apartment is a stack of papers and press clippings held down by a book called "Organizing, Organizing, Organizing." The title is an appropriate centerpiece to this table, even to his current life.

Chabasinski is the man responsible for organizing Measure T. On Nov. 2, 62 percent of the voters in



Ellen Goodman

Berkeley, Calif., turned out in favor of Measure T and banned electroshock therapy in their city.

By American standards the initiative was a radical one. Even by Berkeley standards it was unique. For what is believed to be the first time, citizens found a specific medical treatment on the ballot. They voted against the psychiatric establishment, against authority.

"The essence of the doctor's campaign against us was to say, 'We're DOCTORS, how can you tell us what to

do? You're too ignorant to tell us what to do," says Chabasinski with more than a hint of pleasure at their comeuppance.

The 45-year-old who works now "off and on" in day care has good cause for his personal grievance. Chabasinski didn't learn about shock treatment by watching "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." At 6 years old, he says, he was institutionalized and given electroconvulsive treatment (ECT). "It took three people to hold me down." He wasn't released for 10 years. He hasn't forgotten for nearly 30 years.

In some ways, Chabasinski is right. This is a battle over control of treatment, technology, a battle about expertise, professionals and people. The campaign against ECT is not unlike the campaigns against nuclear plants or nuclear-waste disposal or a dozen other referendums.

As Allen Stone, a psychiatrist and Harvard law professor, puts it, "There has been for the last 10 years what I think is a wonderful questioning of authority." Yet at some point questioning turns into wholesale suspicion, and suspicion about expertise turns into the confidence of know-nothings. "There is an exaggerated fear of psychiatrists, that they have these science-fiction treatments or they're doing things totally horrible," Stone said. "My

sense is that the public is not well informed about treatment. It's hard to be well informed about treatment."

In fact, in the years since "Cuckoo's Nest" was written, the years since Chabasinski's childhood was brutalized, the treatment of ECT has changed into a more benign procedure. Under controlled conditions, it carries fewer risks or side effects. Ironically, California already had one of the most stringent laws regarding ECT and protecting patients' rights.

Psychiatrist Loren Roth, a University of Pittsburgh professor and chair of the American Psychiatric Association's Commission on Judicial Action, says, "Nobody likes the idea of electricity in the brain. I'm aware of the public fear, the potential and past misuse. But in terms of changing severely depressed, mute, catatonic people at a life-threatening risk it can be a most dramatic, impressive treatment."

The Berkeley case, suggests Roth, is one of a series in which we face conflicting rights: The right of a patient to have a beneficial treatment vs. the right to be protected from a harmful treatment. The right of an individual to contract with a doctor for any procedure vs. the right of the public to regulate procedures.

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