

NICARAGUA

Innocent Bystanders Routed by Warfare

San Carlos, Nicaragua (NC) -- Feliz Pavanega, 58, was born and brought up in San Juan del Norte on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. She says life was peaceful and food plentiful, especially shad from the San Juan River. Her six children, all under 11 years of age, had plenty to eat, and her husband went out early each morning to work in the fields.

All that changed starting last May when the repeated attacks of Costa Rican-based guerrillas caused Nicaragua's Sandinista government to begin evacuating peasants. On July 28 a five-hour battle was fought in San Juan del Norte, and not many days later Feliz Pavanega was on a plane for San Carlos, the capital of the Department of Rio San Juan.

She described the plane ride as more fearsome than the guerrilla attack.

The plane took her and her family to live in one of the government relocation sites, which house and provide human services for about 5,000 people. For the most part the people relocated are rural workers and their families who were living in isolated areas subject to guerrilla attacks.

Each relocation site has a school, a medical center with a doctor and a food outlet which provides basic necessities.

Bosco Centeno, a man in his mid-30s, is a captain in the Sandinista Popular Army and is in charge of security operations along the Costa Rican border.

Centeno refers to the guerrillas as "contras," short for the Spanish word for counter-revolutionaries, and says their incursions have sped government plans for relocating rural peasants.

"The 'contra' is small. It is isolated, with no trust or tactical support among the population. But still the 'contra' is able to make incursions," he said.

The program is expected to affect 10,000 people and provide them with housing and help them organize into economic cooperatives.

The Costa-Rican-based "contras" are members of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, led by Eden Pastora, a Sandinista revolutionary hero during the war against Somoza and an ex-official in the Sandinista government. He left the Sandinista movement, saying it had been taken over by Marxists.

"Pastora's gang actually call themselves Sandinistas and manipulate the Sandinista idea," said Centeno.

"Their two radio stations are called Voice of Sandino and Voice of Free Nicaragua," he added.

At San Carlos, Feliz Pavanega and her family were given a tent with plastic roofing. Inside were sacks of basic grains, tins of coffee and cooking oil.

In a field nearby wooden dwellings are under construction. Until these dwellings are ready, living in the tent is not easy because the constant rain is rough and the wind whips through the plastic roofing.

For Mrs. Pavanega, this means her children have continuous colds.

"What about the hospital here?" she was asked.

"You should see it! You should see all they've brought in: x-ray, a maternity ward," she said.

"What about school? Are your children in school yet?"

"Next month. This is the break."

"Does your husband work?"

"Yes, in construction of those new houses," she said, pointing. "Along with my oldest son."

"Do you want to return to San Juan del Norte?"

"Yes, but not if there's 'contra.' And not if I have to go in that plane again," Mrs. Pavanega said.



Serving the Rebels

Father Regello Poncele, a 44-year-old Belgian priest, travels through many guerrilla-held areas in El Salvador that have been largely abandoned by the clergy to provide spiritual assistance. His work is neither approved nor forbidden by his home diocese of Bruges. (NC Photo from UPI)

EL SALVADOR

Kissinger Report Draws Criticism

San Salvador (NC) -- The Kissinger Commission report on Central America does not address the basic problem of human rights abuses in El Salvador, according to the head of the San Salvador archdiocesan human rights agency, Maria Julia Hernandez.

She was interviewed by telephone in her office in El Salvador and said she is disturbed that the report "doesn't address the problem of those who have been murdered, those who have disappeared."

The report, she said, "doesn't respond to the repression of the people, but supports the very structures which are the problem." She said she was referring to support for the military which she called the source of repression.

The Kissinger report, issued Jan. 11, recommended that Salvadoran military aid be contingent on certified human rights improvements. Reagan administration officials said "selective cutoffs" might be considered, but only if there is no danger of victory by guerrillas.

Amnesty International, prior to the publication of the Kissinger report, said there is a "continuing high incidence of extrajudicial executions, 'disappearances' and arbitrary arrest and torture of persons from all sectors of Salvadoran society."

"All of the Salvadoran security and military forces have been regularly implicated by reports of noncombatant civilians having been the target of such abuses. In addition, many other Salvadorans have been seized and have then 'disappeared' or have been summarily executed by heavily-armed men in plain clothes acting in the guise of death squads," the report said.

Amnesty International is an independent agency monitoring human rights.

It said evidence, including eyewitness, survivor and defector accounts, indicate squads are composed of regular and reservist military and security agents acting under

direct orders of Salvadoran military and security officials.

Amnesty International said it opposes use of military aid for "arbitrary arrest, torture, disappearance and extra-judicial executions" and urged mechanisms to ensure that aid is not used for such purposes.

A study of Central America by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, scheduled for publication Jan. 30, also differs with the Kissinger report. The Carnegie report is the result of a cross-section of opinion by 16 Central American experts.

A Carnegie commission press release Jan. 12 praised the Kissinger report's economic and social proposals, but said that it "employs humane and liberal language to justify and reinforce current policy." It found the Kissinger report "fundamentally flawed" because "economic and military assistance to intransigents will not bring about negotiations in El Salvador or the regional settlement which the (Kissinger) commission supports."

U.S. Predicts Trial Soon in 4 Murders

Washington (NC) -- The Reagan administration predicted Jan. 16 that the trial of five Salvadoran ex-National Guardsmen accused of the 1980 murders of four U.S. Catholic churchwomen will be completed by mid-1984.

The prediction, contained in the administration's new report to Congress on the situation in El Salvador, said completion of the trial this year could hinge on an upcoming appeals court decision on whether the case has properly been elevated to its final stage.

A similar appeals court decision last March delayed trials for the five ex-guardsmen when the court ruled that more evidence was needed before a trial date could be set.

"The case against (the) ex-National Guardsmen...now seems likely to reach completion by mid-1984," said the administration's report, submitted to Congress in place of the semi-annual reports that had been required by law certifying human rights progress by the Salvadoran government.

President Reagan vetoed a bill last November extending the certification requirements and instead promised periodic reports to Congress on the situation in El Salvador.

CHILE

4 Sought by Police Seek Vatican Asylum

Santiago, Chile (NC) -- Four people sought by Chilean police as suspects in the August murder of a general entered the Vatican diplomatic mission in Santiago Jan. 16 and asked for political asylum.

A statement issued by the Vatican mission, called a nunciature, said the two men and two women scaled a 10-foot wall in an "unauthorized entry" into the nunciature grounds. The statement did not say if the Vatican would grant asylum but said the papal nuncio, Archbishop Angelo Sodano, contacted the foreign ministry "to look for a solution to the problem."

A government statement said the four suspects belong to the guerrilla Leftist Revolutionary Movement and turned over weapons, including five revolvers, to nunciature officials. It identified them as Jose Hector Aguilera, Jaime Rolando Yovanovich, Elba Duarte and Pamela del Carmen Cordero.

The government said the four were suspects in the Aug. 30 assassination of retired Gen. Carol Urzua, who was governor of metropolitan Santiago at the time he was murdered.

Five other members of the Leftist Revolutionary Movement have been arrested and charged with murdering Urzua. Police said at least 20 guerrillas were involved in the murder plot.

The government statement did not ask the nunciature to turn over the suspects to Chilean authorities.