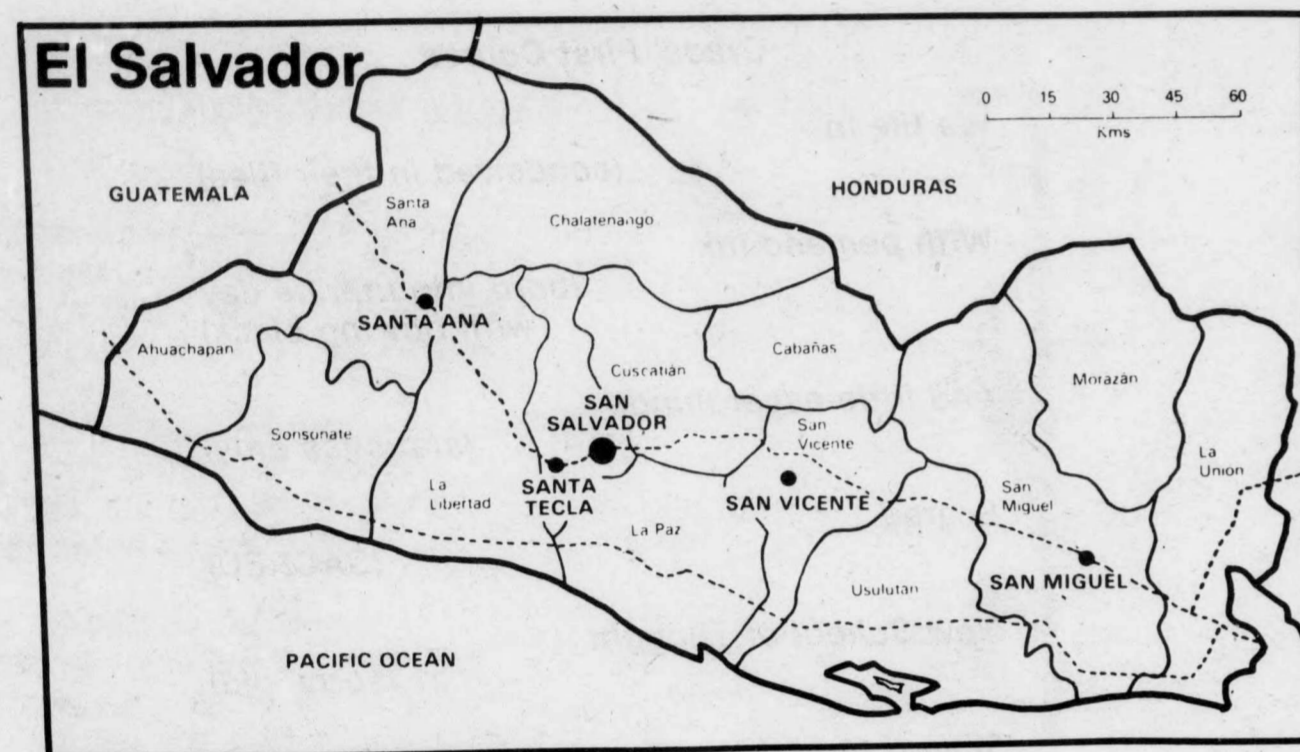


# REAGAN, WAR AND EL SALVADOR



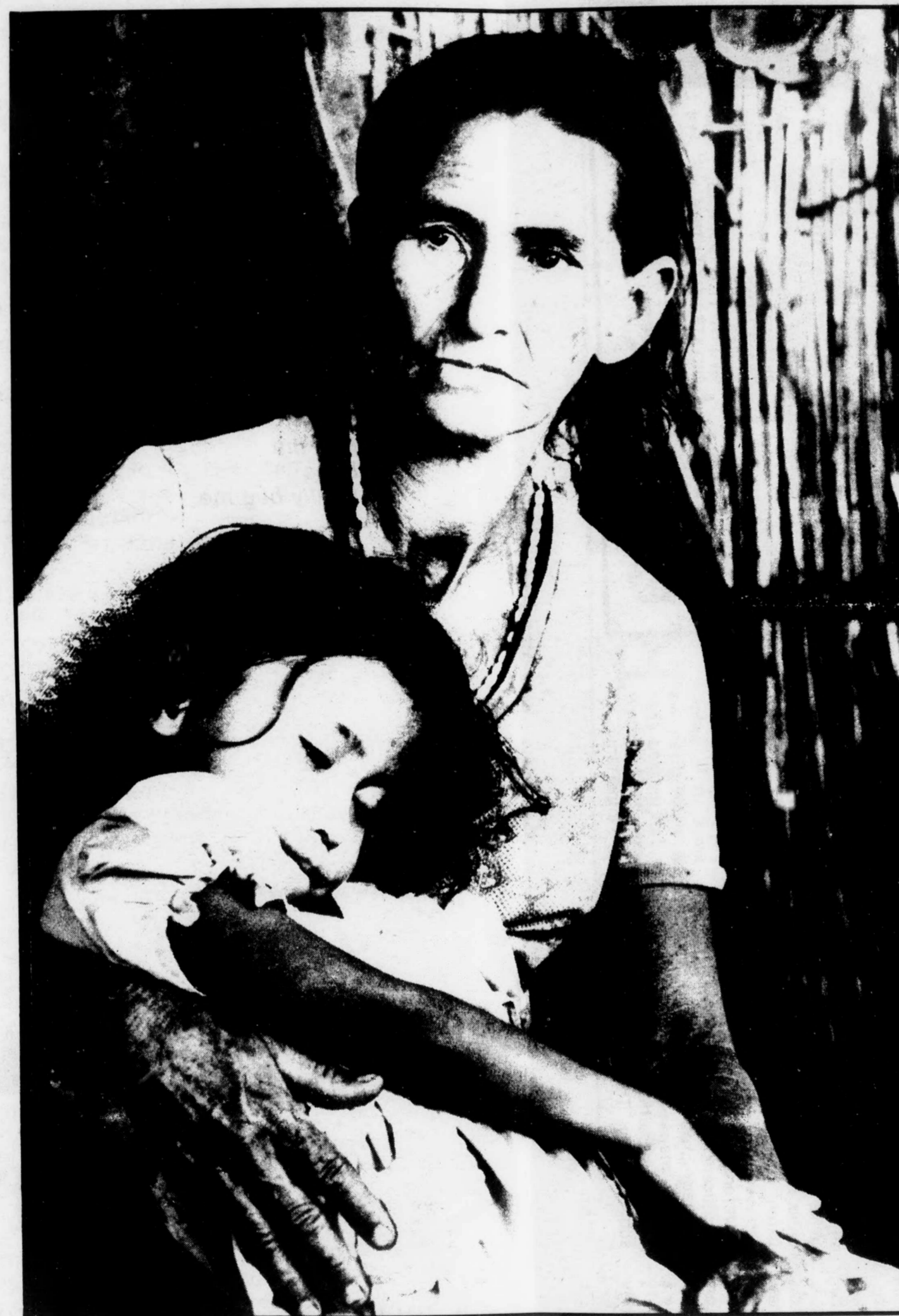
By JOHN ADAM

'No More Gunships For El Salvador' is one of the headlines from the U.S. CISPES, (Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), monthly publication *Alert!*

As of June 1985, the U.S. Government had supplied El Salvador with five new fully equipped Gunships. According to a CISPES pamphlet, 'What's Happening in El Salvador', American involvement in Central America can be explained in the following terms: "The Reagan Administration... IN PRINCIPLE oppose any change in the social system which would upset the power structure, the relationship of the people to the local business class, and the ability of U.S. businessmen to invest without fear of changes in the economic system."

Since 1980 U.S. CISPES has reported that the U.S. Government had, by 1985, supplied 1.7 billion dollars in aid. 78% of this aid was in the form of military equipment, while 10% was used to supply food. The U.S. has also sent military advisors to El Salvador who, "are now virtually running the El Salvador military." Another publication, *There's a Hidden War In El Salvador* supports this statement: "Our (U.S.) Government is involved in every stage of the air war. We supply the bombs, bullets, and planes. We train the pilots..."

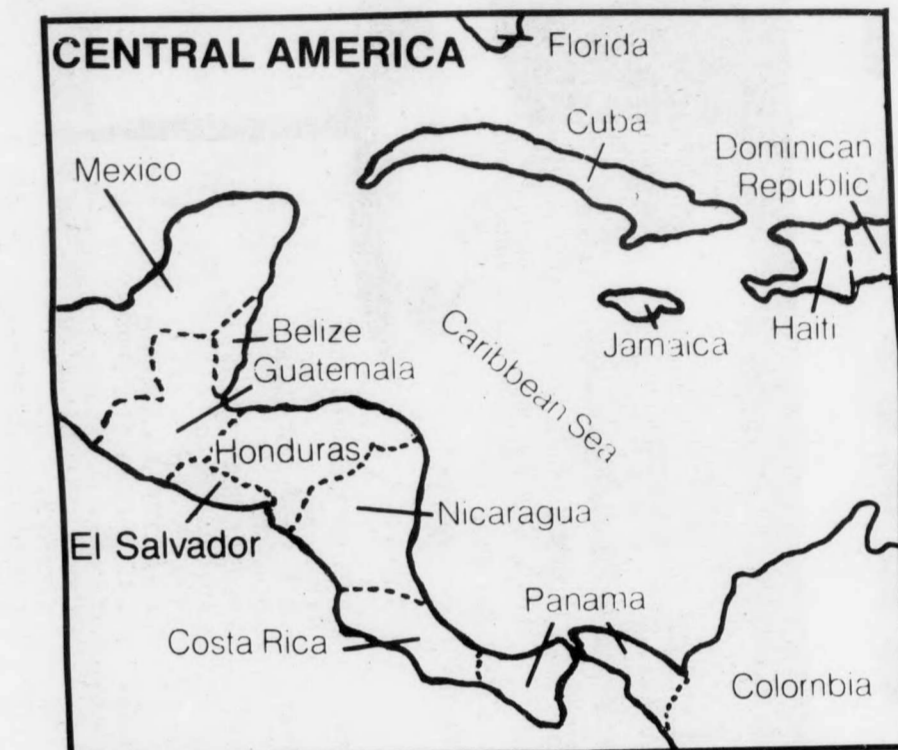
These advisors have introduced to the El Salvador military the policy of "rural pacification". This policy involves "herding people they consider neutral into virtual concentration camps, and opening up the rest of the countryside as a fire free zone." The gunships are useful for "herding" the people; one story in *Alert!* tells of a young woman from San Vicente province who, with 24 other people, was chased by gunships for eight days, until the group relocated to a nearby refugee camp.



*Resigned to the continuing struggle between government forces and the FMLNFR (the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front/Democratic Revolutionary Front), this old woman comforts a child already exposed to the horrors of war.*

Many refugees from El Salvador have also fled to the U.S.- mostly as illegal aliens. One such refugee, Cesar, escaped to the U.S. via Guatemala and Mexico. In September 1985 Cesar and Saul,

also from El Salvador, spoke to a group of concerned citizens from Central Maine. For both of these gentlemen, staying in El Salvador meant certain death, due to their involvement. However



Cesar clearly stated that "We are not coming here by choice." Cesar and Saul are not alone. The same article, which appeared in *The Sun Metro* from Central Maine, reported that there are approximately 700,000 Central Americans who have fled to the U.S. since 1979. Meanwhile, El Salvador's "death squads" have been responsible for more than 60,000 murders and 5,000 abductions.

U.S. CISPES is only one of the American based, protest organizations. The newsletter, 'El Salvador: A Look at Reality', contains a list of over 20 protest groups that are against U.S. involvement in Central America. In June 1985, I happened to meet a man who proudly wore a button that said "Stop the Bombing in El Salvador." His wife said, "He's mad at the Government and their policies in El Salvador, but I'm afraid for him because he is so deeply involved in the protest movement." She went on to say, "Sometimes I feel as if he is being watched..." As we left each other, I asked him to send me as much information on the subject as he could. About a month later, I received a large bulky envelope which contained many newsletters and pamphlets.

An organization in Guatemala, dedicated to finding missing, or abducted, persons, ran a fund raising drive in the U.S. by selling bracelets. When an individual donates \$5 or more to "Finding", they sponsor one missing Guatemalan. These donations, ideally, will be used to eventually locate the missing person. On the pamphlet which describes this procedure, my friend from Central Maine wrote, "I constantly wear one of these bracelets for which I donated \$5... It is for me the perfect symbol of my commitment to continue the struggle for Diego's (the man he sponsors) people, that he and all the others shall not have suffered in vain."