

March 1, 1983

Editor
The Washington Post
Washington DC

Dear Sir,

Certain Senators and Congressmen are now clamoring for a "negotiated solution" and "power-sharing" in El Salvador as if these were realistic options, however desirable. In fact, in every major insurgency since World War II, once the shooting started, one side has always ended up winning everything, and the other side losing everything. Algeria does not share power with France, nor, despite the elaborate farce of the Paris Peace Accords, do the North Vietnamese with the erstwhile South Vietnamese. For that matter, Robert Mugabe does not share much power with Joshua Nkomo, let alone with Ian Smith. Our distinguished legislators would be better advised to stop deluding themselves with wishful thinking and instead face the harder choice of who they want to win or lose in such cases, and act accordingly.

And when they decide to give aid, they should take two lessons from the pros in Moscow and Peking: (1) Give the aid without fuss or fanfare, minimizing direct U.S. participation, so that if the client loses anyway, the patron's prestige will not unduly suffer; and (2) give the aid in moderation but with implacable patience and staying power until the desired goal is reached.

The Congress has already given ample proof of its ability to lose in international involvements of the El Salvador type. In some venue, there or elsewhere, a demonstration of its capacity to win one would be reassuring!

Sincerely,
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