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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

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January 31, 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: Letter from Dr. Brzezinski to the Pope

At the January 28 SCC meeting on El Salvador the Department was asked to prepare a draft letter from you to the Pope dealing with the situation in Central America. Attached for your consideration is the draft requested.

Peter Tarnoff
Executive Secretary

Attachment:

Draft letter to the Pope.

Dedclassified/Released on 8/10/94
under provisions of E.O. 12356
By J. Saunders, National Security Council

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Draft Letter

Your Holiness:

I am writing to you to seek your personal understanding and support and your wise counsel in dealing with a trend of events in the Central American region which is most disturbing to my government. From our consultations with Cardinal Casaroli I believe that the Holy See shares this concern and is prepared to assist.

A tide of modernization is moving through Central America which is creating irresistible pressures for rapid and profound economic, social and political reforms. In most countries of the region, outmoded political and social structures, unable to cope with these pressures, are responding with repression. Elements of the extreme left are seizing this opportunity to launch violence and terrorism designed to destroy the existing order and replace it with a Marxist one which promises to be equally repressive

His Holiness
John Paul II,
Vatican City.

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and totalitarian. They are aided and abetted in these efforts by Cuban interventionism. The net result is a polarization of these societies accompanied by violence and a decimation of the ranks of moderate, reformist elements which are striving to follow a course of peaceful change. El Salvador is the current and most pressing example of this.

The Catholic Church has long been a champion of the oppressed people of Central America and an opponent of repressive governments. With its stature among the people it is a powerful force which can make a decisive contribution to furthering a process of peaceful change. In Nicaragua the Church has played a critical and most constructive role on behalf of moderation and peaceful reforms, both during and after the Somoza downfall. In El Salvador the Church under Archbishop Romero's leadership has to date played a similar role. However, in recent weeks, the Archbishop has both publicly and privately indicated a shift away from this position. Impatient with the pace of progress of the moderate Revolutionary

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Governing Junta led by the Christian Democratic Party and reformist military officers, and increasingly convinced of an eventual victory by the extreme left, the Archbishop has strongly criticized the Junta and leaned toward support for the extreme left.

Through our frequent and frank dialogue with Archbishop Romero and his Jesuit advisors we have warned them against such a move. We have urged them not to abandon the Junta in this critical, initial phase when it is struggling to establish itself and get its program of reform and development under way. The Church's leadership in counseling the faithful is so important to the Junta's survival and success. We have cautioned the Archbishop and his advisors strongly against support for an extreme left which clearly does not share the humanitarian and progressive goals of the Church. Our efforts to persuade them have unfortunately not proven successful.

Ambassador Wagner recently communicated to Secretary of State Casaroli our specific concerns regarding the situation in El Salvador and requested

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his assistance with the Archbishop. I am now writing to share this concern directly with you. The people of Central America urgently need the wise intervention of Your Holiness to ensure that the Church plays the responsible and constructive role on behalf of moderation and peaceful change which only it can play. I urge you to give this matter your most careful consideration and to lend your support at this important moment in the history of the troubled Central American region.

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