

WORLD AND NATION

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly

Protestors denounce deportation



Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — Bitterly denouncing "scandalous policies" of the Reagan administration, more than 200 U.S. religious leaders pleaded Thursday for a halt to deportations of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees and an end to the jailing of American church workers who try to shelter them.

Reacting strongly to recent arrests of Americans who had given refugees sanctuary in the Southwest — and to convictions of two workers in Texas — the leaders said it was the government that was guilty of violating U.S. law in returning refugees to face the threat of death in their homelands.

The Reagan administration, which strongly supports the governments of El Salvador and Guatemala, has sent thousands of refugees back to those countries on grounds that they came to the United States for economic reasons, not out of fear of persecution at home as they claim.

However, the church leaders said many of the refugees would appear well qualified for asylum on the 1980 Refugee Act's grounds of "persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution" at home.

They said it was an American's legal right, if not obligation, to protect refugees from conditions of death and terror. There may have been "a momentary drop" in Salvadoran assassinations and disappearances "from thousands to hundreds," said the Rev. Avery Post, president of the United Church of Christ. But he added, "Is that any comfort at all?"

New highs predicted

U.S. trade deficit rises

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The United States' foreign trade deficit hit \$10.3 billion in January, a 28 percent jump from December, as imports swamped the country's best export performance in more than three years, the government said Thursday.

Analysts said a rebounding U.S. economy and the strong dollar led to the import gains and they predicted those factors would combine to ensure that America's trading woes would worsen further this year.

The Commerce Department said the January deficit was up from an \$8 billion deficit in December as im-

ports rose 9.2 percent, to a new total of \$29.7 billion, the highest monthly figure since last September.

Exports rose by a smaller 1.4 percent in January, but the monthly total of \$19.4 billion was the highest monthly figure since U.S. firms sold \$19.55 billion abroad in September 1981.

Analysts discounted part of the export growth, saying it was the result of a surge in auto parts sales to Canada following a strike-related slowdown in purchases in previous months.

Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige, viewing the bleak January figures, predicted the U.S. trade

deficit this year would hit \$140 billion, up sharply from last year's record deficit of \$123.3 billion.

Baldrige blamed the deterioration on the continued strength of the dollar plus expected further growth in domestic demand. He predicted that exports, which rose 9 percent in 1984 despite the strength of the dollar, would rise by a similar amount this year.

The dollar plunged sharply in frantic trading on Wednesday after a concerted effort by European governments to drive the price down, but it appeared to have stabilized on Thursday and some experts said it could rise again in coming weeks.

Officials respond to Sandinista offer

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Reagan administration opened the door Thursday to a new dialogue with Nicaragua but dismissed as probably meaningless an offer by President Daniel Ortega to send home 100 Cuban military advisers and impose a moratorium on acquiring new arms systems.

"It is relevant to ask why they bother," Vice President George Bush told the Austin Council on Foreign Relations in Texas. He said the 100 advisers are about 1 percent of the Cubans in Nicaragua and that the army cannot absorb new weapons now.

On the face of it, Bush said in a speech, the steps taken by Ortega "do not appear to represent significant moves."

But Secretary of State George P. Shultz, flying to Ecuador, said he was "perfectly willing" to meet with

Ortega next weekend when they attend the inauguration of Uruguayan President Julio Sanguinetti in Montevideo. "I'll listen carefully to what he says," Shultz told reporters.

Shultz said that in view of the "several thousand" Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua, the withdrawal of 100 would be only a "token" gesture.

"But if the token is something that will lead to rather massive reductions, that's something else again," he said.

President Reagan and Shultz, in a possible campaign to gain congressional approval of renewed U.S. aid to rebels in Nicaragua, had challenged the legitimacy of Ortega's government and suggested they would like to see it overthrown.

The Nicaraguan leader had accused the administration, in turn, of "aggravating the climate of tension in the region (through) a campaign of calumnies and lies."

Bush raps Congress for passing farm bill

Associated Press

AUSTIN — Vice President George Bush rapped Congress on Thursday, calling its approval of emergency aid for financially troubled farmers a step in the wrong direction.

Insisting that the federal budget deficit must be trimmed, Bush criticized Congress for passing legislation to provide emergency farm loans to finance spring planting.

"Our federal budget is growing out of control and is endangering the long-run health of our government," said Bush, who has been visiting several Texas communities this week.

"We must put this gargantuan of a government on a diet, or it will swallow up our future prosperity."

"And yesterday, the United States Congress moved in the wrong direction in terms of get-

ting this budget deficit under control," he said.

On Wednesday, the U.S. House and Senate passed bills to provide loan help to embattled farmers.

The action came as thousands of farmers gathered at Ames, Iowa, to protest Reagan administration farm policies which they said threaten many of them with bankruptcy.

Bush's comments Thursday to a joint session of the Texas Legislature brought a quick, negative reaction from one of those in his audience — Gov. Mark White.

The governor said the White House has failed to provide leadership on farm problems.

Asked about Bush's remarks, White replied, "He doesn't get to veto it. I would hope there isn't going to be a veto."

"What we are faced with is an emergency situation."

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