Publication of this Directory expresses a hope that it will promote better understanding, and ultimately broader agreement, in our nation regarding alternatives to the continuing violence and repression in parts of Central America. A very wide range of views is reflected in the organizations listed in the Directory--corresponding substantially to the range of views existing in Central America--as to the nature of the region's problems, their causes, possible solutions, and the responsibility of external actors for them. Some of these views are simplistic, partial, and reflect extremist politics. Others are more complex, comprehensive, and express pragmatic and more broadly shared political attitudes.

The more we can understand the different perspectives on Central America represented by organizations in this Directory and the more familiar we can become with the range of options discussed by them for the region, the more likely that the policies American citizens and leaders advocate will in fact be responsible and constructive responses. Americans, like people everywhere, tend to choose intelligently when exposed to a range of choices and given the information and freedom to choose.

Forty years ago Albert Camus predicted: "Over the expanse of five continents throughout the coming years an endless struggle is going to be pursued between violence and friendly persuasion, a struggle in which, granted, the former has a thousand times the chances of success than that of the latter." With few illusions about the "goodness of human nature" and the searing experience of World War Two just behind him, Camus nevertheless dedicated himself to the principle, as he put it, "that words are more powerful than munitions."

We hope that greater experience with friendly persuasion at home may result in greater efforts at friendly persuasion abroad. Too few people and organizations today see as fundamental the choice between violence and "friendly persuasion."

The World Without War Council is one organization that still does. We hope that this Directory will encourage Americans concerned about peace in Central America not only to appreciate the need for more "friendly persuasion" as we discuss this problem within our own communities, but also to ask more often the question: which are the forces in Central America that favor words, and which the ones that favor munitions?

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