under Kissinger are poor recommendations for popular support. His saber-rattling during his tenure as NATO commander has not endeared him to any but the most blatant cheerleaders for the military-industrial complex.

He had to literally be sneaked in as Secretary of State at a time when the right-wing sweep was at its height and when a cowardly Senate Foreign Relations Committee feared to examine him closely even on matters which they had vowed to do, such as Watergate and his stewardship of the presidency during the Nixon-Watergate period.

At no time was it ever possible for the military-industrial complex to orchestrate the kind of synthetic popular support which a would-be military dictator needs as a starting point. On the contrary, since January 20, the day Reagan was inaugurated, Haig's stature in the broad public view, including large segments of the Reaganite establishment, has been sinking.

Haig's ultimatum

In the first place, on that day, Jan. 20, before Reagan even had the opportunity to finish with the inaugural ceremonies, this arrogant would-be dictator handed Reagan a now-famous memorandum which allegedly merely described the duties and obligations which Haig as Secretary of State would assume.

This was no mere job description of Haig's office. It was more in the nature of an ultimatum and went far beyond what would normally be described as the duties of the manager of U.S. imperialism's foreign affairs department.

It was, as a number of capitalist newspapers hinted, an encroachment upon the executive, that is, an attempt to take what normally would be reserved for presidential authority.

The White House staff was then so frightened by the scope of Haig's expansion of his own authority that they were forced to leak the contents of the Haig ultimatum. They thereby temporarily held him at bay before he arrogantly moved to publicly reduce the image of the presidency from the constitutional repository of real power to that of a ceremonial office, similar to that of the crowned monarchs of Britain, until such time as he himself ascended to the throne.

In proceeding in such a manner Haig showed that he never knew or learned anything from the long history of struggle between British prime ministers and the crown. The former have never flagrantly and impudently challenged the legal authority of the crown—to this very day.

Bull in china shop

While the White House hastened to reduce the significance of this attempt by the military at encroachment upon the civilian authority, objective events began to militate against Haig. Indeed one can say they were of his own choosing.

On the military assistance bills for foreign aid appropriations, in which the Reagan administration made some nominal cuts in order to give the appearance of consistency in cutting expenditures, Haig ostentatiously rushed in like a bull in a china shop to denounce the cuts.

He did it not so much because he was opposed to them but because it infringed on his authority. This thereby evoked the wrath of some of the more significant ultra-rightists in the House and in the Senate who oppose Haig from the right.

But this again could be merely reduced to a tempest in a teapot. Haig was getting by because of his "tough talk" against the supposed threat posed by the Soviet Union, depicting the USSR as the organizer of "terrorism," etc., etc., ad nauseam. That all went well with the Reaganite reactionaries of all sectors.

Haig and El Salvador

It was when Haig and the whole Reagan team made El Salvador the "supreme test" of the struggle against the Soviet Union that Haig's authority began to diminish, even if ever so slightly.

Talking tough and repeating the anti-communist tirades endlessly is one thing. Convincing the broad mass of the people about the necessity for militarily intervening in El Salvador is something else again.

Consistently true to the military-bureaucratic mind, which is usually contemptuous of the masses in the first place and deaf to their aspirations and feelings as a whole, Haig thought that El Salvador would be precisely the test which would elevate his standing in the capitalist establishment and from there pave the way to establish him as the popular figure in the Reagan establishment who had at last won a real battle against "the menace of communism."

He did not, however, consult the people of either El Salvador or the United States.

His confidence in the use of purely military force on the small country of El Salvador turned out not to be shared even by some of the top old hands of the Republican rightwing's foreign policy advisers. The more moderate Republicans began to shy away. Some of the Democratic politicians slowly got the courage to at least express some doubts. One of them even went to El Salvador and came back with a story of impending disaster.

Mounting opposition to Reagan cutbacks

In the meantime the cheers for the Reaganite domestic policy, as it became more concrete with each passing day, became more and more muted as angry denunciations began to pour in from all parts of the country of the mass misery Reagan really meant to impose. So that House Speaker O'Neill, who only a month ago spoke of the "overwhelming support" for the Reaganite ax swinging and budget cutting against the millions of workers and poor, in particular, now sees the support as running "three-to-two."

In the meantime, widespread support for the Salvadoran struggle has begun to mushroom in all parts of the country.

Haig on nuns

Originally, Haig thought that he could sweep aside the outrage over the virtual genocide being practiced in El Salvador and the killing of the Catholic nuns by merely making sure that his brother, a priest, would be sitting side by side with him during his confirmation hearings and that the television networks would take care of that—which they did.

But rather than the success which a would-be dictator needs for popular support, El Salvador is precisely the kind of failure which can doom Haig's efforts at playing dictator.

In addition to that, his short tenure as Secretary of State has compelled him to be exposed to public view rather exhaustively so that a large segment of the population can take a good hard look at him and hear what he is saying as well.

Thus Haig, under questioning by a Congressional committee concerning the brutal murder of the nuns, which is universally regarded all over the world to be the work of the junta, advanced the brilliant theory that it might all have been an accident and maybe the result of an ambush by the guerrillas. This elicited a laugh even in the small group of visitors at the hearing.

More of that will cut Haig down to his actual size—a mere military thug, now wearing striped pants as a disguise.

Reagan pullback on advisers

It is no wonder, then, that the Reagan administration, under pressure from national and worldwide protests over the El Salvador interventionist policy, said that it will withdraw, as of next July, some of the advisers from El Salvador.

This, of course, is a lie. But it has tremendous significance from the point of view of the political struggle that is emerging in the United States against the genocidal war in El Salvador and the war against the working class and the poor, in particular, at home.

The promise that there will be even a tiny withdrawal from El Salvador is the type of political concession which shows that the Reaganites are learning that to unleash a war abroad means to open up the war of the masses against the government at home.

That's why the Reagan administration, with unquestionably significant support from the Pentagon itself, is either getting ready, as the *Washington Post* puts it as of today, to "cut [Haig] down to size" or put him on the skids altogether.

After all, a man on horseback is only needed by the military-industrial complex if he can lead them—not if he makes a mess of it.

It is too early to say, as Speaker O'Neill briefly remarked after Reagan appointed Vice President Bush to head the crisis management team for the White House, that Haig came out of the struggle "with his wings clipped and salt on his tail." The secrecy with which the cliques in the military-industrial complex and in the military establishment as a whole operate makes any such predictions hazardous.

What has surfaced, however, is enough to show that a fierce struggle is on and promises to become deeper and more violent.

March 25, 1981

Haig thought that El Salvador would be the test that would elevate his standing in the capitalist establishment and pave the way to establish him as the popular figure in the Reagan establishment who had at last won a real battle against "the menace of communism." However, he did not consult the people of El Salvador or the United States.