

Duarte illness could test fragile republic

By Storer H. Rowley
Chicago Tribune

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador—The incurable cancer that afflicts President Jose Napoleon Duarte also is threatening El Salvador's developing democracy and U.S. policy in this war-ravaged nation, authorities here contend.

The Reagan administration and El Salvador's 5 million people were stunned by the news last week that Duarte, 62, who took office in 1984 after winning the country's first freely contested election in 50 years, was dying.

The administration has poured more than \$3 billion in economic and military assistance into this Central American country since 1981, trying to shore up democracy and prevent a communist takeover.

For nine years, a Marxist-led insurgency has been waging a civil war that has claimed 60,000 lives. Duarte has been the cornerstone of the anti-insurgency effort.

"This is a moment of crisis," said Col. Mauricio Vargas, chief of military operations for the Army General Staff. "We are definitely worried. In any democracy, this would represent a crisis."

"The name Duarte, more than any other in El Salvador, represents high morality, hard work and his own vision. Political, economic and social changes are underway now. It's the same case as the death of President Kennedy, when President Johnson had to take over. For the good of the country, we hope everything develops well."

Duarte stepped aside indefinitely as president last week to seek emergency treatment in the United States for a recently discovered tumor in his stomach. He left Vice President Rodolfo Antonio Castillo Claramount temporarily in charge of a government that is besieged by guerillas and embattled by political opponents on the Left and the Right.

National elections are scheduled for next year, and even if he weathers the threat to his health, Duarte is prohibited by law from serving another 5-year term. Moreover, his presidency had already been seriously weakened by the loss of the Legislative Assembly last March to a right-wing majority.

"The lives of nations endure. The lives of men will pass away," wrote Duarte in his annual state of the nation speech, delivered in his absence last week by an emotional Castillo.

"I ask the people publicly to find a formula for national consensus as soon as possible that respects the value of liberty," wrote Duarte, reaffirming his offer for a national dialogue that invites the rebels to lay down their arms and incorporate themselves into the democratic process.

In recent weeks, the rebels have launched their most serious wave of sabotage attacks of the war, hitting the electrical power system especially hard. Coupled with a drought curbing hydroelectric power, the attacks have forced the government to ration electricity.

Duarte also urged his countrymen to "forget past grudges" and he called for "unity within the badly divided Christian Democratic Party that he founded. Long before the disclosure of his illness, the party had been split over who should succeed Duarte."

Duarte is undergoing tests at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, where doctors discovered a bleeding and malignant stomach ulcer. The cancer, which has also spread to his liver, was described by one doctor as probably incurable.

In Washington, a State Department spokesman downplayed the implications of the illness, asserting that Reagan administration officials believe Duarte "has laid the groundwork for a transition to democracy."

But the spokesman conceded the administration is concerned that insurgent forces and right-wing death squads could escalate violence in the country and that corruption could continue unabated without Duarte.

Should Duarte fail to return to office, Castillo, 52, a former foreign minister and general secretary of the Christian Democratic Party, faces a difficult period as acting president.

"This is a shock. The question, as with Harry Truman, is, 'Can he [Castillo] run the government?'" said one American political analyst. "He doesn't have the support within the party that Duarte had. And he's going to need a lot of support."

Guillermo Ungo, leader of the Democratic Revolutionary Front, the political wing of the rebel front, said Friday that "no one has confidence" in Castillo.

U.S. Ambassador Edwin Corr met last week with Castillo and reiterated U.S. support for the government, but political analysts suggested that the future success of U.S. policy in support of the Christian Democrats was in doubt. The Reagan administration's policy took a slap in March when the left-center Christian Democrats lost control of the Legisla-

tive Assembly to the right-wing National Republican Alliance Party, known by its Spanish acronym ARENA.

U.S. officials acknowledge they were surprised by the defeats.

Tribune correspondent Nathaniel Sheppard Jr. contributed to this report from Washington.

Boy, 8, found in Mexico may be crash survivor

EL PASO, Tex. (AP)—An 8-year-old boy found wandering in a Mexican border city possibly survived a plane crash and might be from the United States, officials said.

The boy, who doesn't hear or speak and communicates only by gesturing and drawing pictures, was found last Nov. 7 along a highway in Ciudad Juarez. No

one knows his name, but Juarez welfare workers have named him Savat.

Authorities believe the boy is from the U.S. because of his reactions to American cultural icons such as hamburgers and video games, and they believe he lived through a plane crash because of his drawings.

"He drew a plane, then ... a

plane that had crashed," said Luis Torre of the Texas Department of Human Services. Torre said last week that the second drawing depicted a lot of blood and the bodies of two adults and a child.

"We believe those represent his parents and a sister. He showed me by using his fingers that he crawled away from the wreckage," said Torre.

According to a report Torre filed with El Paso police, the pictures seem to indicate the boy was picked up after a plane crash by a passerby and taken to a hospital.

After treatment, he apparently left to look for his family.

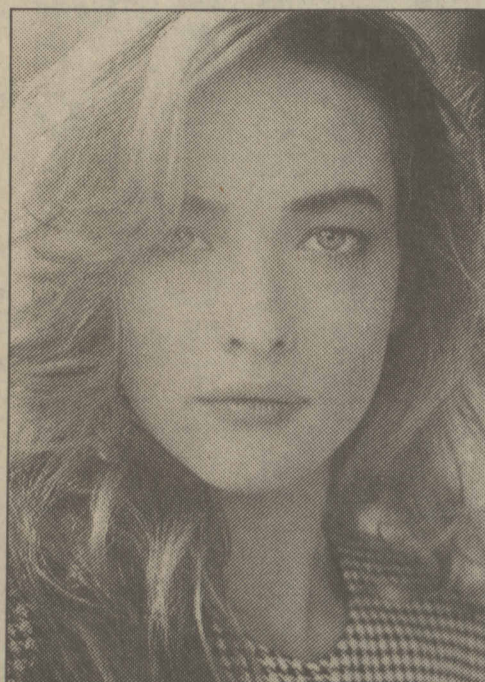
The woman who found the boy, Guadalupe de la Vega, said he doesn't like Mexican food.

ALCOTT & ANDREWS

TAKE 25% TO 50% OFF ALL SUMMER CLOTHING.

OUR SUMMER SALE STARTS TOMORROW AT 8 AM.

This is the summer sale you've been waiting for. In order to make way for our new collections, you'll find all our wonderful summer clothing at 25% to 50% off. In sizes that include petites, every blouse, every skirt, every suit, every dress, every sweater, every jacket, every pair of shoes and all our casual wear is on sale at wonderful prices, all of which means wonderful savings for you.



Alcott & Andrews, American Express and other major credit cards.

430 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE (312) 923-0112 MON. 8-8, TUES.-FRI. 10-8, SAT. 10-6, SUN. 12-5. OAKBROOK CENTER (312) 990-8300 MON. 8-9, TUES.-FRI. 10-9, SAT. 9:30-6, SUN. 12-5.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

NEW YORK

SAN FRANCISCO

ATLANTA

YOUTH COAST PLAZA

WEST HARTFORD

SHORT HILLS

PALO ALTO

STAMFORD