

**Candidates strut; Barb Bush slips**

(AP) — Pres. Ronald Reagan and a buoyant Walter Mondale courted support from Italian-Americans on Columbus Day, pressing their campaign battle for "the soul of our country" one day after a televised debate that neutral polls indicated was a triumph for the Democratic challenger.

"Today we have a brand new race," Mondale told a Monday

rally in New York after he and running mate Geraldine Ferraro marched past thousands of supporters at a holiday parade in Manhattan, "Today everything is different. Millions of Americans know what's at stake in this election."

Reagan, campaigning on his own in North Carolina and then Baltimore, said, "I'm smiling, I'm smiling" after the first of two televised debates.

Meanwhile, while Vice Pres. George Bush competed with the Democrats for attention by car-

rying the Republican banner in the New York parade, his wife Barbara drew notice for a derogatory comment to two reporters aboard the vice-presidential airplane, Air Force Two. Bush said that she and her husband are comfortable with their lifestyle and don't pretend to be poor "like that \$4 million — I can't say it, but it rhymes with rich."

It was a smiling reference to her husband's Democratic opponent, Ferraro. Bush had thought she was speaking off the record in the chat in the aisle of the jet and didn't mean to be derogatory, the vice president's spokesman said later.

Mondale's press secretary, Maxine Isaacs, said: "I assume this was Mrs. Bush's attempt to make a joke, but I don't think it was funny. It was in poor taste."

Aides to Reagan and Mondale both claimed victory in the debate. But in an overnight survey conducted for Newsweek magazine, 54 percent of those polled said Mondale did better than Reagan in Sunday night's debate, compared with 35 percent who put the president on top.

Even so, a majority also said Reagan was "more capable of dealing with the country's problems."

Stumping in North Carolina, the president said there is "opportunity unlimited" in America.

"That is what we are about to restore for all of us," said the president, who led Mondale by 15-20 percentage points in most pre-debate polls.

Reagan then traveled to Baltimore, where he dedicated a statue of Christopher Columbus and jabbed at Mondale — without mentioning his name — for being among the "pessimists who can't bring

themselves to admit America is back on the right track."

The president said that attitude reminded him of what Baltimorean H.L. Mencken said of the feeling that possessed the Puritans: "The haunting fear that someone, somewhere may be happy."

Reagan also referred to the debate while in Baltimore, when he said, "Contrary to what you may have heard in the last 24 hours, I do have a plan" for a second term.

Mondale charged during the debate that the president had not offered the voters a clear idea of what he would do if re-elected.

The president declared that the campaign between him and Mondale is a battle "for the soul of our country."

command. Duarte called the meeting for 10 a.m. in La Palma, a town near the Honduran border in an area of frequent clashes between guerrillas and government troops.

He invited rebel leaders "now in the mountains" to discuss "the details for their incorporation in the process of democracy and the preparation of an atmosphere of freedom so that we may have another popular election."

The U.S. Embassy in San Salvador, the capital, issued a statement saying: "President Duarte's offer to meet with guerrilla military leaders is a major forward step in the process of national reconciliation based on democratic elections and a clear advance in the search for peace in Central America."

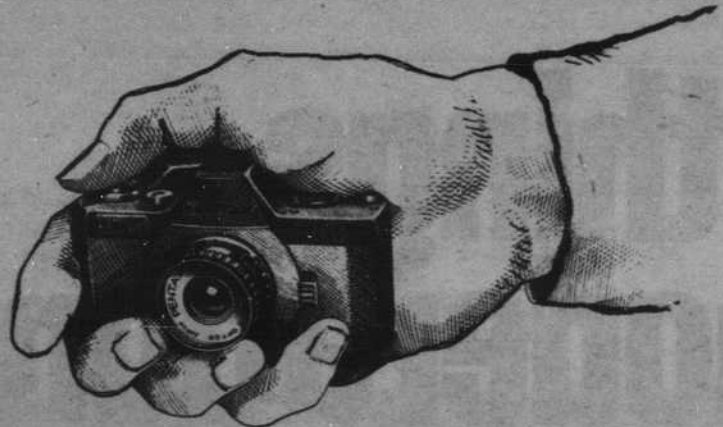
"We applaud the action and the speech and fully support it."

Duarte's speech drew a warm response from most assembly delegates. U.S. envoy Jeane Kirkpatrick applauded enthusiastically. Representatives of Nicaragua, which El Salvador accuses of supporting the guerrillas, and the Soviet Union did not applaud.

In El Salvador, the rebels' clandestine Radio Venceremos made no mention in its midday broadcast of Duarte's speech.

Both the United States and the Contadora Group — made up of Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama — have urged such talks for more than a year. The rebels had insisted that the man then heading the Salvadoran government — Duarte's conservative predecessor, interim President Alvaro Magana — negotiate a power-sharing pact first. The talks proposal foundered on this issue.

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