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El Salvador

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El Salvador is located on the Pacific side of the Central American isthmus between Guatemala to the north and west and Honduras to the North and East. A population of almost 5 million supports itself on a land area roughly the size of Massachusetts, making El Salvador the most densely populated country in Latin America. The population is 89% *mestizo* (Indian-Caucasian), 10% Indian, 1% Caucasian. Over 50% is under the age of 18; 60% is rural. Per capita income in 1975 was $352; per capita caloric intake was the lowest in Latin America.

For nearly a century El Salvador has been dominated by a small group of families—the so-called Fourteen Families—who comprise the strongest and most compact rural bourgeoisie in Central America. These families own the best land for the production of the agricultural commodities which make up 75% of the country's export earnings: traditionally coffee (El Salvador is the world's 8th largest coffee producer), more recently cotton and sugar. From its base in agriculture, this group has moved to control manufacture, construction, media, services, marketing, and banking. Land ownership is highly concentrated: 2% of the population owns 60% of the arable land. In 1971, six families owned as much land as 80% of the rural population together. Only 5% of some 400,000 families engaged in agriculture owned plots of 10 or more hectares; 10 hectares (24 acres) are considered the minimum for subsistence agriculture in El Salvador. 64% cultivated less than one hectare. Of the farmers cultivating less than 10 hectares, 70% sharecropped or rented, with money rent becoming generalized in the 1950s under the pressure of rising land prices. By 1980, over 60% of the rural population was landless—neither owning nor renting nor sharecropping any land at all—and formed, along with poor farmers unable to subsist on their holdings, a migrant or semi-migrant agricultural proletariat seasonally employed on the big agro-export estates. While 90% of the rural work force finds some form of wage labor, only 40% has year-round employment. As a consequence, there has been significant emigration of rural laborers: primarily to Honduras before 1969, and then to Nicaragua, Guatemala, Mexico, and the U.S. As many as 500,000 Salvadoreans are estimated to live in the U.S., most as undocumented migrants.

Between 1971 and 1975, the total of wage earners not employed in agriculture grew by about one third to some 400,000; those self-employed in non-agricultural sectors tripled in the same period from some 70,000 to 200,000. Wage workers in manufacture and industry constitute

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today about 42% of all non-agricultural wage earners. Another 20% or so are employed in the service and government sectors. El Salvador thus has a relatively well developed industrial and white collar proletariat. A significant section of the urban population, however, is made up of *marginados:* poor people fleeing poverty and repression in the countryside but not finding employment in the capital intensive industrial or service sectors. They subsist in the city as petty traders, maids, prostitutes, temporary laborers, and so on.

8% of the population of El Salvador receives 50% of the national income. Over half lives at or below subsistence levels (represented in 1977 as the equivalent of $10 per month per person in goods and services). Illiteracy is estimated at 50%. Infant malnutrition is endemic, and infant mortality is four times the U.S. level. Unemployment has risen from 5% in 1961 to over 25% in 1979, and is especially concentrated in rural areas. Because of inflation, the availability of cheap labor, and the repression of trade unions, the index of real wages in industry and agriculture has fallen back to the level of 1965.

As the above summary suggests, the principal social conflict in El Salvador has been between an oligarchy composed of the agro-bourgeoisie along with its industrial, mercantile, and financial extensions and the poor peasants and rural and urban proletariat. Straddling this conflict are middle strata groups: relatively well-off peasants in the countryside, petty bourgeois and professional middle class in the towns and cities, and military and government personnel, in addition to sections of middle peasants and the marginalized population dependent on ruling class patronage.

EARLY HISTORY

The territory that now comprises El Salvador was conquered by the Spanish in 1524–25 as an offshot of Hernan Cortés' expedition against the Aztec Kingdom of Central Mexico. The indigenous inhabitants were the Pipils and Hauhautls, tribes related to the nomadic Nahua peoples of Mexico. The Spanish established, through land grants (*encomienda*) to the colonizers, the system of large landed estates (*latifundia*) which evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries into the *hacienda* system, and which in a specifically capitalist form still dominates the country today. Until the late 19th century, the mode of production was semi-feudal. The colonized Indian and *mestizo* workers, called *colonos,* received a plot of land (*minifundio*) on which to raise animals and food crops in return for work for the *hacendado* or landowner. Under the colonial regime many Indian villages, especially in the upland regions, retained pre-Conquest communal lands (*ejidos*); there they maintained subsistence agriculture and some semblance of their culture and collective relations of production.

In 1821, Spain's Central American provinces declared their independence. A Federal Republic of Central America was formed in 1823. Throughout Latin America in the early 19th century, the break-up of Spanish colonialism resulted from the political and economic discontent of a proto-bourgeoisie. The more commercially oriented sectors of the landed gentry and urban merchants and financial groups involved in the export trade coalesced as the presence of foreign, particularly British, capital and trade increased. In the process of constituting itself as a class, this proto-bourgeoisie adapted the Liberalism of the great bourgeois revolutions in Europe and North America.

Three basic objectives emerged:

(1) *Free trade,* following the Manchester School principle of the "mutual advantage" accruing to all parties active in the unhindered (by mercantilist legislation) operation of the international commodities market. In practice, as dependency theorists have shown, this meant

continued or increased Latin American specialization as producer and exporter of foodstuffs and raw materials.

(2) *Republicanism,* or the capture and organization of the state apparatus by the Liberal bourgeoisie as an instrument of primitive accumulation, on the assumption that the Church and colonial administrative and land tenure system perpetuated a "feudal" restriction of property rights and trade. In practice this meant development and control of a national army as an instrument of power, and a characteristic oscillation between Liberal rhetoric about democracy and progress and government by military junta.

(3) *Diffusionism,* or the domination of the interior of the newly formed nation states—seen as a space of "barbarism"—by the economic, cultural, and political practices—"civilization"—elaborated in the urban centers, the points of contact with the world market and the capitalism of Europe and North America. In practice this meant that the local bourgeoisie not only encouraged imperialist penetration of Latin America but saw its own fortunes and enterprises as dependent on it.

These three objectives are articulated together in a Latin American variant of the doctrine of Progress—still the ideological mainstay of the Latin American bourgeoisie, now in the technocratic guise of " modernization theory."[1]

El Salvador was a hotbed of Liberalism in the early 19th century. The Industrial Revolution was creating metropolitan societies that required imports of cheap agricultural commodities from the periphery to supply industry and feed populations made up increasingly of urban wage laborers. El Salvador's volcanic soil and cool uplands were ideally suited to the mass production of a commodity that has become a staple of industrial society, *coffee.* But expanded coffee production and export increasingly challenged the semi-feudal *hacienda* system and the surviving Indian communal lands—both sustained by the ideological and administrative superstructures of the Church and the colonial bureaucracy. Following independence, struggles between Liberals and Conservatives (the latter representing the traditional Hispano-Catholic culture and its base in patrimonial landed property), *colonos* and coffee entrepreneurs, Indians and army, gave rise to a series of coups, uprisings, invasions, and intrigues. The Central American Confederation broke apart by 1838, the year El Salvador emerged as a sovereign nation. By 1880, the Liberals had consolidated their hold on the state apparatus. Between 1880 and 1912, the communal lands of the villages were disentailed, expropriated, and sold to wealthy families at give-away prices. The economic basis of the oligarchy was thus established. And the proletarianization of the peasantry began, a process which has reached perhaps its "highest stage" in the present demographic crisis in El Salvador. The lands which had guaranteed the physical and cultural survival of the Indians and *colonos* and of the old *haciendas,* overwhelmed by taxes and debts, were turned over to coffee (and later sugar and cotton) production for export. U.S. and

[1] Gabriel García Marquéz's popular *One Hundred Years of Solitude* constitutes a kind of tragicomic allegory of the Liberal "century of progress" in Latin America, and by implication a deconstruction of its premises and drive. While the first wave of imperialism in Latin America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries focused on raw materials and agricultural commodity production, investment after World War II tended to shift in the direction of dominating production and services for the expanding internal markets, especially media, manufacture, finance services, utilities, construction, and, lately, fields like electronics and pharmaceuticals, and runaway shop assembly, utilizing Latin America's vast reserves of cheap labor. "Modernization theory," arguing that Latin America can overcome underdevelopment only through collaboration with foreign technology and investment capital, represents the ideology of this new stage of imperialist penetration. "Modernizers" tend to be anti-oligarchic, making them conjunctural allies of the left, but at the same time pro-U.S. and/or pro-Western Europe.

British capital arrived to provide the rail and port facilities and credit required to bring the crop to market. An aggressive agricultural capitalism displaced the somnolent patriarchy of the *hacienda,* but without transforming the property form of the *latifundia*. A recent historian of El Salvador charts this transformation of the political economy as follows: "The division in land utilization between cattle-raising haciendas and villages cultivating maize, which dated from the colonial epoch, was overridden by the introduction of coffee planting. . . . From the beginning, coffee was concentrated pre-eminently in the hands of a small and relatively rich coffee bourgeoisie owning large estates. At first, these big coffee planters maintained the traditional relations of production that existed on the haciendas . . . [However] since in the coffee-growing regions the land left to the *colonos* could be more profitably used for coffee cultivation, the *colono* system was already replaced by wage labour in the 1920s. The workers no longer received any land for their own use, but only a primitive hut on the estate. During the 1940s and 1950s, with the extension of coffee cultivation (annual receipts from coffee exports rose by a factor of ten), the number of landless rural labourers also rose in proportion to the traditional *colonos*. . . . A mobile rural proletariat of seasonal workers grew up, with the chance of finding employment on the coffee estates only between November and March (the harvest season). This process of replacing permanent employees by seasonal workers, which in coffee cultivation took place only slowly on account of the relatively narrow limits of mechanization imposed by natural conditions, was repeated far more violently in cotton cultivation. The rapidly rising demand for cotton on the world market in the early 1950s opened up the lower lying valleys and coastal areas to agricultural production for export. Since cotton cultivation required still less labour than cattle-raising, only a small proportion of the former *colonos* found work in cotton growing, and generally (as on the coffee estates) only then during the months of harvest. . . . The old *colono* system now exists on only a few obsolete haciendas."[2]

THE ORIGINS OF THE MODERN WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

The period from 1912 to 1932 is generally accounted the Golden Age of the Salvadorean coffee bourgeoisie. The Conservative *hacendados* had long since been defeated or co-opted. A National Guard had been established to police the countryside and put down the periodic uprisings of *colonos* or Indians resisting dispossession. Political intrigue expressed only the intra-class contradictions of different sectors of the oligarchy over access to credit, tax and export policy, and legislation affecting land ownership and utilization. But an opposition of primarily rural workers also began to develop in these years, despite the fact that organizing in the agricultural regions was illegal (and remains so to this day). In 1911, a Central American Workers Congress was held in San Salvador. On the heels of the Russian Revolution in 1917, embryonic Communist and Socialist groups appeared, especially among urban artisans, teachers, and students. They helped organize El Salvador's first trade union, the Regional Federation of Salvadorean Workers (FRTS), which began in 1920 to organize both urban and rural workers.

A young intellectual, Agustín Farabundo Martí, became the key figure in the nascent working class movement. Exiled for political agitation as a university student in 1920, he returned to El Salvador to become a rural organizer for the FRTS. In 1925 he participated in the founding of the Central American Socialist Party. In 1928–30, he joined the struggle against the occupation of Nicaragua by the U.S. Marines, serving as Augusto Cesar Sandino's personal aide and lieuten-

[2] Harald Jung, "Class Struggles in El Salvador," *New Left Review* 122 (July-August 1980), pp. 4–5.

ant. In 1930, together with a group of FRTS leaders, he founded the Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS), which concentrated its initial efforts among the farm workers of the coffee-growing regions in the mountainous northern region of El Salvador. (Chalatenango and Morazán provinces are today zones under the control of the guerrilla army named after Farabundo Martí.)

The collapse of commodity prices caused by the 1929 Depression brought massive unemployment and precipitated a crisis of hegemony for the coffee oligarchy. In 1931, in the midst of intense worker-peasant agitation in the cities and countryside, a reform candidate favored by the Left, Arturo Araujo, was elected President, and PCS candidates won several municipal and legislative elections. The oligarchy responded with a coup d'etat and installed the dictator Maximiliano Hernandéz Martinéz—Theosophist, army General, amateur theater buff, and soon to be one of the greatest mass murderers in Latin American history. Martinéz refused to allow the elected candidates of the PCS to take their seats. Martí and the Party planned a general uprising for January 22, 1932. The plan was discovered; Martí and other key leaders of the PCS were arrested and summarily executed. Leaderless and badly coordinated, the revolt was crushed by the National Guard after several days of fighting. Then began the event Salvadoreans call *La Matanza*, or massacre. Martinéz sent troops and vigilante groups hired by the landowners into the regions most affected by the uprising. An estimated 30,000 peasants and rural workers—some 4% of the population—were slaughtered. Indian communities were destroyed and Indian dress and customs prohibited. The PCS and the FRTS were decimated, and the progressive intellectuals went into exile.

La Matanza traumatized a whole generation. Martinéz ruled until 1944, representing the interests of the most reactionary anti-industrial sectors of the coffee oligarchy. He created the characteristic institution of modern Salvadorean politics, the military-civilian junta in which the Army upper echelon controls the state security apparatus, and the oligarchy the economic ministries. In the half century since 1932, periods of formal democratic rule in El Salvador total only 9 months. Dictatorship was the political instrumentality required for the rapid expansion of coffee and cotton production in the 40s and 50s, the boom period of Salvadorean agricultural capitalism. The PCS and the labor movement, illegalized and driven underground, managed after 1944 to reorganize and develop a politics of conjunctural alliances with radicalized strata of the petty bourgeoisie and an emerging "modernizing" fraction of the bourgeoisie which was intent on industrialization and the creation of a national consumer market via agrarian reform.

THE 1960's ENTER THE U.S.

The U.S. Navy and Marines stood by during the revolt and massacre of 1932, and U.S. administrations since have supported El Salvador's juntas and have helped train its army and police forces. But unlike Nicaragua or Honduras, El Salvador had never experienced direct U.S. intervention or significant investment; the coffee oligarchy's relative wealth and power had given it a virtual stranglehold on the economy after 1932. This situation was to change in the early 1960s, for four basic reasons:

—the crisis caused in El Salvador, indeed throughout Latin America and the Third World, by the decline of export commodity prices on the world market in the late 50s.

—increasing pressure from bourgeois and petty bourgeois "modernizers" against the constraints imposed on industrial and mercantile development by the reactionary sector of the oligarchy and by the extremely rigid internal market. (New political tendencies, sponsored by business interests and civil and military technocrats, began to appear within or to the left of the

"officialist" parties of the oligarchy, principally the PRUD [Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity] in the 50s and the PCN [Party of National Conciliation] in the 60s.)

—the impact throughout Latin America of Fidel Castro's popular-democratic 26 of July Movement in Cuba, at first welcomed as a model of political mobilization not only by the left, but also by progressive bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces.

—the U.S. effort to contain the Cuban Revolution and to offset the growing influence of Japanese and Western European imperialism in Latin America in the early 60s. (Shifting its diplomatic strategy, the U.S. tried to co-opt the pressure for economic, especially agarian reform and democratization throughout Latin America by means of new aid and investment policies; the "modernizing" wing of El Salvador's oligarchy represented just the sort of allies the Alliance for Progress anxiously sought.)

Within El Salvador, the struggles held in check since 1932 exploded in mass demonstrations in 1960 which threatened to bring down the whole structure of oligarchic rule. This time direct U.S. involvement was required to hastily put in place the regime charged with containing the radical upsurge. The Directorio Civico-Military (Civilian-Military Directorate) was, as its name suggests, new wine in old bottles. The oligarchy still ruled through the military, but now incorporating reformist tendencies and considerable U.S. aid and advice. A Central American Common Market (CACM) was created under U.S. auspices in 1961, and the book value of U.S. investment in El Salvador began a dramatic increasing, going from $19.4 million in 1950, to $45 million in 1967, to over $100 by 1977. Much of this new investment flowed into joint ventures with the Salvadorean bourgeoisie; "last touch," import-dependent manufacture developed in special zones free from Salvadorean tariff, tax, and labor legislation. Most of the new production was destined for export. Through the CACM structure, El Salvador became a leader in inter-regional export sales, especially to its even more underdeveloped neighbor, Honduras.

The Directory and the subsequent juntas of the 1960s pursue a two-pronged strategy of rule which has come to be known as "reform with repression." Concessions are made to the "modernizers," with considerable noise about "national conciliation" and "peaceful revolution," while the government, continued illegalization of the organized left, repression of all but government-sponsored organizing in the countryside, and attempts to dominate or restrict the growing trade union movement in the cities. In 1962, President Kennedy praised the model, noting that "governments of the civilian-military type of El Salvador are the most effective in containing Communist penetration in Latin America." Meanwhile, the military and police are re-equipped and retrained with considerable U.S. encouragement and assistance. Experts from the CIA-connected American Institute for Free Labor Development come to preach the gospel of Sam Gompers to Salvadorean unionists. And an extensive paramilitary terrorist network appears, linked to the state security apparatus but operating nominally outside its control—modeled undoubtedly on Operation Phoenix in South Vietnam, the CIA-designed program to assassinate NLF cadre and supporters without directly implicating the U.S.-backed regime. Then as now, the promised reforms were superficial, since they were imposed by a ruling class coalition intent on pursuing industrialization without significantly affecting its own traditional agro-export interests, that is, without a thorough agrarian reform.

A number of new political forces took shape during this process of token modernization, most notably: a popular, European-sponsored Christian Democrat Party (PDC) based among urban professional groups, some farmers, and Church sectors; an illegal populist coalition similar to the Cuban 26 of July Movement called the United Front for Revolutionary Action (FUAR); a radical labor/petty bourgeois electoral front called the Party of Renovation (PAR), influenced by the still

illegal PCS and Social Democratic currents among the technocratic intelligentsia. The joint-venture industrialization projects of the 60s facilitated the legalization and consolidation of previously semi-clandestine shop level organizations and spurred the organization of new trade unions, primarily in the urban sector. In 1966, the Unitary Syndical Federation of El Salvador (FUSS)—in effect, a reincarnation of the FRTS—was formed to challenge the "yellow dog" trade union central, the CGS, sponsored by the government and supported by AID and AIFLD. By 1967, FUSS had almost doubled the number of its affiliates and begun to displace the CGS's domination of trade union activity. A number of white-collar unions appeared, most significantly the large and militant National Association of El Salvadorean Educators (ANDES); ANDES, an organization of elementary and secondary teachers, established important links between rural and urban sectors. Despite heavy repression in the countryside, at least one combative organization of farm workers and poor peasants was put together under radical Catholic auspices, the FECCAS (Catholic Federation of Salvadorean Peasants).

The late 60s witnessed a steady escalation of labor militancy and solidarity, including strike actions that culminated in massive demonstrations against the regime on May Day 1969. The junta in response created ORDEN (Democratic Nationalist Organization) in 1968, in the words of its founder, to "make a barrier to the attempts of the communists to provoke subversion in the countryside." ORDEN boasted some 50,000 to 100,000 members at its height. Nominally a civic self-help organization for dispensing credit and technical aid to peasants, ORDEN actually provided cover for a massive spy and paramilitary network. Its members were authorized by the regime to carry weapons and worked to police or terrorize the rural population, either in tandem with the state security forces, especially the National Guard, or on their own. (ORDEN was officially disbanded in 1979, though it undoubtedly continues to function *de facto*.) Besides ORDEN there developed in the late 60s and 70s a number of right-wing paramilitary death squads sponsored by landowners' associations and/or sections of the security forces. The death squads specialized in the kidnapping, torture, and assassination of political opponents or trouble-makers. (Similar groups appear at the same time in Guatemala.) The most notorious are the White Warrior's Union (Union Guerrillera Blanca—its symbol is a white hand stenciled on the homes of its victims) and the FALANGE (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion Anticomunista-Guerra de Liberacion).[3]

Meanwhile, the jerry-built structure of the Central American Common Market—the instrument, as we have suggested, of increased U.S. involvement in the region—approached collapse by the end of the 60s. Tensions over trade balances and labor migration between El Salvador and Honduras were adroitly manipulated by the military regimes of both countries to produce the 1969 five-day Soccer War, so-called because it followed riots after a soccer match between Salvadorean and Honduran teams. The war allowed the Salvadorean oligarchy to patch up its differences and ride a tide of national chauvinism to victory in the 1970 elections, thus postponing the political mobilization of the left and reform movement that had been building up

[3] Despite State Department condemnations of both "right and left extremism" in El Salvador, the right-wing death squads are not exactly indigenous tropical commodities. They have been shown to be closely linked with the official state security forces before and after 1979. These forces were revamped in the 60s under a joint U.S. AID and Office of Public Safety (OPS) program. Graduates of OPS training at, for example, the U.S. International Police Academy in Washington, D.C., occupy key positions in the Salvadorean security apparatus, especially in the areas of intelligence, riot control, and counterinsurgency. The current guru of the death squads—and darling of the oligarchy—is a shadowy figure named Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, allegedly a confidant of Roger Fontaine, a key Reagan administration adviser on Latin American affairs.

throughout the decade. But the war also left the CACM in a shambles and resulted in the expulsion of 300,000 Salvadorean migrant farm workers from Honduras. This aggravated the already high level of unemployment in the country and put a crimp in the economic development program of the Alliance for Progress "modernizers." The big landowners and their military allies continued to dominate the scene for another decade, with even less rhetoric and reform than they were willing to concede in the 60s.

THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

The relative liberalization of the 1960s encouraged, as we have seen, the growth of an electoral opposition to the oligarchy in El Salvador. In 1967, the candidates of the Christian Democrat Party and PAR placed second and third behind the "official" candidate of the PCN and the military. PAR was promptly banned, but its elements regrouped in two electoral formations: the National Democratic Union (UDN, an electoral front of the still illegal PCS) and the smaller Social Democratic National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) led by Guillermo Ungo. (The MNR has the franchise of the European-dominated Socialist International in El Salvador.) In 1972, the UDN, MNR, and the Christian Democrats formed an electoral coalition, UNO (National Opposition Union), based on a Common Program of agrarian reform and democratization and on the candidacy of José Napoléon Duarte, the popular head of the Christian Democrats. UNO was crushed in a massive and blatant electoral fraud, followed by a wave of repression against UNO and the trade unions. Duarte was arrested, tortured, and exiled to Venezuela. The bubble of an electoral challenge to the oligarchy had burst.

Throughout the 60s, the Salvadorean Communist Party had followed the "orthodox" line of pursuing electoral coalitions with petty bourgeois radicals and potentially progressive sectors of the bourgeoisie. Influenced by the Cuban Revolution and subsequent guerrilla movements in Latin America (including one in neighboring Guatemala in the mid-60s), a faction appeared that advocated armed struggle. It split from the PCS around 1970, forming a guerrilla organization known as Popular Forces of Liberation—Farabundo Martí (FPL). Around the same time a fusion of Liberation Theology activists and young college-educated Guevarists formed another guerrilla group, the Popular Revolutionary Army (ERP). Both were initially rather isolated and adventurist in character, but gained momentum after the 1972 destruction of the UNO electoral front. In 1975, a bitter factional struggle over the importance of mass work in the ERP led to the murder of ERP militant Roque Dalton—El Salvador's greatest modern poet and a key leader and spokesperson for the revolutionary left. (Dalton began his career as a PCS activist.) Dalton's supporters left the ERP to form yet another guerrilla group, the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN).

Each of these organizations developed over the course of the 70s three separate but interdependent components: (1) a political party, (2) a guerilla army, (3) a corresponding autonomous mass organization—the Salvadorean term is "popular organization"—made up of affiliated trade unions, peasant organizations, neighborhood (*barrio*) committees, student groups, etc. Until the formation of the Democratic Revolutionary Front and the FMLN army in 1980, the structure of the revolutionary left in El Salvador was as follows:

(1) Popular Forces of Liberation-Farabundo Martí (FPL)/Armed Forces of Popular Liberation (FAPL)/Popular Revolutionary Bloc (BPR, formed in 1975 and claiming today some 100,000 adherents).

(2) Party of the Salvadorean Revolution (PRS)/People's Revolutionary Army (ERP)/Popular Leagues—28th of February (LP-28).

(3) National Resistance (RN)/Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN)/United Popular Action Front (FAPU, founded in 1974 and thus the oldest of the popular organizations).

Two more parties and corresponding popular organizations without a guerrilla component in the 70s are:

(4) Communist Party of El Salvador (PCS)/National Democratic Union (UDN) (as we have seen, the dominant line in the PCS did not favor armed struggle in the 70s, though the party did become involved in the FMLN after the collapse of the "reform" junta in 1980).

(5) Revolutionary Party of Salvadorean Workers (PRTC)/Popular Liberation Movement (MLP)—a small grouping formed in 1979 and dedicated apparently to trying to bring about a unification of the other left and popular forces.

These five organizations constitute the core of the revolutionary movement in El Salvador. The strongest and most influential of them appears to be the triad FPL/FAPL/Bloque Popular which contains three major rural organizations, including the FECCAS, and the large and militant school teachers' union, ANDES. While it is fair to say that the core cadre of the party components come from various Marxist or Marxist-Leninist backgrounds, the guerrilla and popular organizations are popular-democratic in nature, i.e. involve people who are not explicitly Marxists. For example, many Church personnel working in the Catholic *comunidades de base* (neighborhood councils) are members or allies of the popular organizations. (Roque Dalton's poetry is a good index of the militant but nondogmatic spirit of the revolutionary movement.)

The strategy of the revolutionary left had two major objectives until 1979: first, the development of open mass work around economic demands through the popular organizations, combined with an armed presence in the rural areas, and, secondly, the working for an alliance of rural and urban workers. Guerilla military activity concentrated initially on "armed propaganda" actions against ORDEN and the National Guard in the countryside in order to create space for political and economic organizing. Several groups, notably the FARN, specialized for awhile in kidnapping and ransoming members of the oligarchy and the foreign community, building up in the process a huge war chest (it is said they gave the Sandinistas $10 million to help finance their final offensive). By 1979, however, it was possible for the guerrilla to begin to consolidate several liberated zones in the mountain regions of El Salvador.

THE 1979 JUNTA

On the heels of the Sandinista victory in the summer of 1979, the Romero government in El Salvador, which represented the most conservative sectors of the oligarchy, was overthrown, on October 15, by a group of military officers (Juventud Militar) influenced by the reformist and technocratic currents generated in the 60s and 70s. Led by the charismatic Colonel Adolfo Majano, they proceeded to form a new civilian-military junta, this time under progressive auspices. Representatives of the Christian Democrats and the MNR were included, and the PCS was given control of the ministry of labor. ORDEN was officially dissolved.

The politico-military organizations of the revolutionary left initially denounced the coup and the junta as a maneuver from Washington to head off the escalation of revolutionary sentiment and organization that had been fueled by the Sandinista victory. They fell back to a wait-and-see attitude, however, when the new government announced an ambitious program of nationalization, agrarian reform, and democratization. The clearest analysis of the conjuncture was perhaps that of the Bloque Revolucionario, which argued for a strategy of pressing the junta to carry out this program knowing that it would become another instance of U.S.-sponsored "reform with

repression,'' and that the degree of economic and political polarization had reached a stage where a centrist solution was no longer viable.

The U.S. was in fact implicated in the October 1979 coup, which much resembled the assassination of Diem and his replacement by a similar ''reformist'' junta in South Vietnam some 15 years earlier. Carter sent to El Salvador his top Latin American Human Rights troubleshooter, Robert White, and with him an aid package of ''logistical and communications support.'' The U.S. counted on its side a group of officers to the right of Colonel Majano and the dominant forces within the Christian Democrats, including its leader Napoléon Duarte. While Majano and his cadre were given charge of implementing the agrarian reform, the officers loyal to the Pentagon—represented on the junta by Colonels Jaime Abdul Gutierréz and José Guillermo Garcia—maintained control of the military and security apparatus. Meanwhile, the junta was also pushed from the right. The most reactionary sectors of the oligarchy went into exile in Miami or Guatemala, denouncing the junta and Jimmy Carter and funneling money and instructions to the paramilitary death squads. Under pressure from the right and the left, the initial junta soon disintegrated. On January 3, 1980, the civilian members of the junta resigned (including the MNR and PCS representatives), charging the military with failing ''to concretely begin a process of democratization and the necessary structural reforms.'' The guerrilla and popular organizations resumed their insurrectionary challenge. They were backed by Archbishop Romero of San Salvador, who called on the people to support the popular organizations in order to ''preserve the liberation process,'' and denounced increased U.S. military aid to the junta. He was assassinated on March 24, while celebrating Mass. By May, the entire left wing of the Christian Democrats had resigned from the junta, forming in the process a new party, the Popular Social Christian Movement (MPSC). Power shifted at this point to the ''anti-Communist'' remnant of the Christian Democrats, Duarte and his cohort Morales Erlich, and to the military hardliners who were advocating destruction of the rural guerrilla and the popular organizations. As the junta lost any semblance of popular support, it was to depend increasingly on U.S. aid and on the use of violence against it own population. On April 2, 1980, Carter approved $5.7 million in military aid to the junta. On May 14, six hundred peasants trying to flee the fighting were massacred along the Sumpul River by Salvadorean and Honduran troops. On October 14, the army and National Guard launched an offensive in Morazán province, a stronghold of the left, resulting in 3000 dead and 24,000 refugees. On October 12, the Archdiocese of San Salvador denounced the junta for waging a ''war of extermination'' against the population. On November 28, six leaders of the Revolutionary Democratic Front were kidnapped, tortured, and killed by paramilitary agents. On December 3, four U.S. women working in the *comunidades de base* were assassinated by elements of the National Guard. By the end of the year, Colonel Majano had been demoted and eventually was expelled from the junta.

While it is true that the most reactionary sectors of the oligarchy continued to oppose the junta even as it shifted to the right, politically the junta represents a consensus strategy on the part of the Salvadorean bourgeoisie, the military, and U.S. interests to maintain their hegemony. It can be considered a government of the ''center'' only if El Salvador's political options are limited to those articulated within the oligarchy and the upper middle class. It has proven, in fact, to be the most repressive and genocidal regime the country has seen since the Martinéz dictatorship of 1932. Since the junta took power in October 1979, more than 20,000 Salvadoreans have been killed. Human rights organizations active in El Salvador estimate that over 80% of these deaths are due directly to operations by the military and state security forces and a large share of the remainder to the right wing death squads.

The junta's reforms, including nationalization of the banks and redistribution of some large estates, are being implemented politically as counterinsurgency measures; economically they are a means to hasten "modernization" of the economy by shifting capital and human resources from agriculture to industry. In no way do they promise a fundamental transformation of property and production relations in the countryside. Most of the richest coffee growing estates, because relatively small in size, were not affected by the first phase of the reform, which limited expropriation to estates of over 500 hectares. The agrarian reform carries no benefit for the majority of the rural population, which has no access to land, and it will further proletarianize small producer peasants as they are given title to economically unfeasible plots. It is significant that the present architect of the junta's land reform is an American "expert," Roy Prosterman, who was involved in the infamous Land to the Tiller/ Operation Phoenix program in South Vietnam. As Salvadorean versions of "Strategic Hamlets" begin to appear, so too does a growing rural refugee population.

THE REVOLUTIONARY DEMOCRATIC FRONT (FDR) AND THE FARABUNDO MARTÍ NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (FMLN)

The civilian forces which abandoned the junta in the course of 1980 coalesced in a formation called the Democratic Front, initially composed of the MNR and the left wing of the Christian Democrats, the MPSC. In January 1980, the five popular organizations—the Bloque, FAPU, LP-28, UDN, and MLP—formed a common Revolutionary Coordinating Council of the Masses (CRM). On March 15, 1980, the Democratic Front and the CRM joined together to form the present Democratic Revolutionary Front. In May, the guerrilla groups placed their activities under the control of a common military directorate, the DRU. (Previously they had functioned autonomously and sometimes at odds with each other.) By the end of 1980, the DRU achieved the unification of the guerrilla into a single "people's army," the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN). The FDR recognizes the FMLN as its "political and military vanguard"; in turn, the FMLN accepts the Platform of the FDR as the program of the revolution.

The FDR Platform is built around the slogan of a Democratic Revolutionary Government, based on the dissolution of the existing state apparatus and the institution at national and local levels of *poder popular* (people's power) assemblies. The economic program it envisions is similar to that of the Sandinistas, involving nationalization and collectivization of broad sectors of the economy—"the fundamental means of production and distribution that are now hoarded by the oligarchy and the U.S. monopolies, the land held in the power of the big landlords, the enterprises that produce and distribute electricity and other monopolized services, foreign trade, banking, and large transportation enterprises"—, but leaving space for the continued operation of small scale private enterprises and small farmers. The Platform defines the social base of the FDR as "formed above all by the working class, the peasantry, and the advanced middle layers . . . united with small and medium industrialists, merchants, artisans, farmers . . . honest professionals, the progressive clergy, democratic parties such as the MNR [and] advanced sectors of Christian Democracy." It calls for the dismantling of the military and police forces, to be replaced by a People's Army composed of the FMLN and those elements of the present armed forces "who conduct themselves honestly, reject foreign intervention against the revolutionary process, and support the liberation struggle of our people"—evidently an appeal to officers and non-coms sharing the reformist line identified with the deposed Colonel Majano. While the FDR Platform does not call for socialism as such, it is clear that its implementation would require and

create a context for the elaboration of forms of socialist democracy and workers' control of the means of production. As in Nicaragua, the achievement of full socialism is seen as a second stage of the revolutionary process once victory over the junta and its military apparatus has been won and consolidated.

The FDR constitutes at present the broadest alliance of political forces in the history of El Salvador, representing an estimated 80% of the population. It includes the two major left-reformist parties (MNR and MPSC), the five popular organizations and their base constituents, the two universities of El Salvador, the principal trade unions and peasant organizations, several associations of small businessmen and professionals, the Church *comunidades de base,* and even some members of the oligarchy like its first President, Enrique Alvaréz Córdoba (kidnapped and murdered along with six other FDR leaders in November 1980). Contrary to much misinformation from the U.S. government and from certain sectors of the U.S. Left on this point, the aims of the FDR are *also* those of the FMLN.[4] Though the FDR and FMLN represent different instrumentalities of the revolution, they are organically linked through the popular organizations and through a common Political-Diplomatic Commission similar in character to the five-person junta established by the Sandinistas. There is no sense in which the FMLN is "more revolutionary" than the FDR (which includes, after all, the popular organizations as well as the major unions and peasant organizations). By the same token, the FDR is not "less committed" to the armed struggle. Both organizations are necessary to each other, supporting and amplifying one another's activity. The FDR-FMLN union has been forged out of a decade of struggle, sacrifice, and experience in which left sectarianism and chauvinism were real obstacles to the growth of the revolution's military and political influence. It is not an opportunistic marriage of convenience, but rather the *necessary* form of this stage of El Salvador's struggle for national liberation.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Informed observers, including representatives of the Reagan administration in their franker moments, agree that the junta would collapse and the FDR-FMLN come to power without a continued escalation of U.S. military and economic aid. Perhaps the most damning commentary on the junta comes in the "Dissent Paper" on El Salvador prepared by a group of analysts from the State Department, the Defense Department, the National Security Council, and the CIA in November, 1980. The document concludes:

> The governing junta and the armed forces have failed to rally significant support for their reform and counter-insurgency programs . . . [and] failed to neutralize the peasant population. . . . The urban middle class is divided among those who have already chosen to side with the FDR opposition, those seeking to leave the country, and those remaining neutral. . . . Domestic and foreign businesses have nearly completed liquidating their assets and withdrawing their capital from the country. . . . Conflict among members of the ruling coalition continues to spread. . . . Expansion of military capabilities of the opposition forces . . . makes it highly unlikely that a short term military defeat of the guerrilla forces might be achieved. . . . Neither the government nor the armed forces have been able to demonstrate their will or ability to avoid indiscriminate repression of the civilian population, thus contributing to the rapid deterioration of their image among the population and internationality.

[4] When sectarian groups in this country, like the Sparticist League, proclaim that "the defense of the Soviet Union begins in El Salvador" and urge the separation of genuine "proletarian" forces from the "petty bourgeois politicians" represented in the FDR, they merely echo the line of Alexander Haig and the State Department, who likewise insist that the Salvadorean revolution is a proxy war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and see a panacea in the desertion of the middle class radicals from the FDR to the side of the junta and its promised (1983) "elections."

On the other side of the coin, what has kept the junta from collapsing, politically and militarily, is the level of U.S. aid. The FMLN "general offensive" of January 1981, which sought to duplicate the Sandinista's final assault on Somoza in the summer of 1979, ground to a halt against tremendous repression in the cities and $10 million in "emergency" U.S. military aid authorized by Carter just before leaving office. It is doubtful that the revolutionary movement can reach a much higher level of unity than that presently expressed by the FDR. The FMLN can be improved in training, equipment, and experience, and if necessary is prepared for a protracted war (*lucha popular prolongada*), including the possibility of direct foreign military intervention, either by the U.S. or by U.S. proxy armies from the neighboring dictatorships of Guatemala and Honduras. Lacking a chain-reaction demoralization and disintegration of the junta's military and security forces, the FMLN is still short of being able to overcome them decisively in open combat; its perspective is now more one of a war of attrition.[5]

Key to the present situation in El Salvador therefore, is international opposition, especially in the U.S. itself, to all forms of U.S. aid to the junta, economic and military. Other countries are also helping the junta—notably, Venezuela, governed at present by right-wing Christian Democrats close to Duarte, Israel, a traditional supplier of arms to Central American dictatorships, and under Venezuelan pressure Colombia and the Southern Cone dictatorships (though the most important, Brazil, has taken a stance of nonintervention). But U.S. aid has been the decisive factor. The revolution in El Salvador will win if U.S. aid to the junta is cut off. And that aid will be removed only if there is massive opposition to it in this country.

This places a burden on progressive forces in this country at a time when we have to confront many other struggles on the domestic economic and political front. The issue of El Salvador has a relation to these struggles, one which needs to be developed. For the Reagan administration, with all its initial successes, is vulnerable on the question of El Salvador. Everyone active in Salvador solidarity work can testify to the unexpected size and depth of opposition to current U.S. policy. The May 3 demonstration of some 100,000 people in Washington against U.S. involvement in El Salvador was the largest such demonstration since the Vietnam War. "U.S. Out of El Salvador" slogans accompanied the Solidarity Day demonstration in September. Organizing and educating around the issue of El Salvador are an important part of the general tendency towards greater unity and cooperation in the struggle against Reaganism evident today throughout the progressive and labor movement.

The Carter and Reagan administrations have poured into El Salvador in the last two years more military aid than in the whole history of relations between the two countries. In April 1980, Carter authorized $5.7 million in military aid. This was suspended in December, following the assasination of the American religious workers. To combat the FMLN general offensive in January 1981, Carter resumed this aid and approved $10 million more. The January aid was accompanied by military advisory teams charged with the responsibility for helicopter maintenance and training, the U.S. having "leased" 14 Huey combat helicopters to the junta. A counterinsurgency command control headquarters was established. These personnel joined a

[5] There is evidence the FMLN is doing well, nevertheless. *Time* (September 7, 1981) quotes Gen. Wallace H. Nutting, commander of the Panama-based U.S. Southern Command, as saying, "I think we are now observing a stalemate. And in that kind of situation, if you are not winning, you are losing." Its own correspondents add that "Yet another offensive by an estimated 4,000-6,000 leftist guerrillas has been under way in the Central American republic for several weeks. The insurgents are more than holding their own; they are inflicting heavy casualties on El Salvador's undertrained 10,000-man army and simultaneously dealing painful blows to the nation's economy. . . . Says (U.S. Ambassador) Hinton: 'The war is serious now.' "

U.S. military team already present and led by Colonel Eldon Cummings, a veteran of CIA activities in Laos during the Vietnam War. Soon after assuming office, Reagan authorized, without Congressional approval, $20 million in lethal aid, and asked and got another $5 million subject to Congressional approval subsequently. Simultaneously, he fired Carter-appointed Ambassador Robert White (an opponent of military aid to the junta) and increased the number of military advisers to 70. According to the media, there are some 54 U.S. military personnel presently active in El Salvador. This figure leaves out, however, proxy military advisers from U.S. allies, mercenaries (including Cuban and Vietnamese exiles), and the literally hundreds of U.S. "civilian" advisers—including AID, CIA, AIFLD, etc.—presently operating in El Salvador. The Pentagon has made it known that 250–300 U.S. military advisers would be an "optimum figure" for El Salvador.

A clear relationship, therefore, is to be made between military and economic aid to the junta and the anti-labor, anti-social budget cuts being demanded by the Reagan administration. According to the Washington-based Center for International Policy, by March 1981 *almost half a billion dollars* in aid to the junta had been, or was likely to be, approved by the Federal government or multilateral finance institutions beholden to it. This included: U.S. AID, $82 million; U.S. military aid, $35 million (plus Carter's initial $5.7 million); Food for Peace, $17 million; International Monetary Fund, $123 million; Inter-American Development Bank, $101 million; and World Bank, $77 million. The Foreign Aid section of the Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 1982, which goes into effect this October, asks for a whopping $66 million more in military aid and $51.2 million in economic aid. These sums approximate the "savings" that will be achieved in the remainder of fiscal 1981 by the cuts in Federal supports for student loans or for the Food Stamp Program, for example.

There are several key political and legal issues involving U.S. aid to El Salvador and the other regimes of what Noam Chomsky has termed "the Pentagon-CIA Archipelago." According to the Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy, there is a body of over 16 separate laws enacted by Congress over the past decade inhibiting U.S. covert or overt intervention in countries like El Salvador.[6] They provide a legal basis for challenging Reagan policy in the Congress and before the public. The Reagan administration has been testing the limits to which it can ignore, manipulate, or circumvent this legislation, while at the same time mounting an attack on those laws which prohibit U.S. military aid to specific countries due to their human rights record or a past history of U.S. covert activity. Congress has been asked to repeal the Clark Amendment prohibiting U.S. covert activity and aid to paramilitary groups (i.e. UNITA) in Angola, and to repeal restrictions on military aid to Chile, Argentina and Guatemala, all notorious human rights violators and all military allies of the Salvadorean junta.

Two laws have a bearing. An amendment to Section 502 of the Foreign Assistance Act (502b) states: "*No security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.*" The law defines gross violations as including "*torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, prolonged detention without charges and trial, causing the disappearance of persons by the abduction and clandestine detention of those persons, and other flagrant denial of the right to life, liberty, or the security of the person.*" This was the law involved in the

[6] The excellent Legislative Updates of the Coalition, an invaluable tool in anti-imperialist and anti-militarist work, may be obtained by writing to the Coalition at 120 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002. Phone 202–546-8400.

congressional rejection of Ernest Lefever as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights. There is a catch, in that the law allows the President to certify to the Congress "*extraordinary circumstances*" which warrant the sending of military aid to regimes violating human rights. The infamous White Paper on El Salvador, with its now admitted fabrication of Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Salvadorean revolution, was designed to provide just this certification of "extraordinary circumstances."

Secondly, there is Section 701 of the International Financial Institutions Act of 1977, which states: "*The United States Government, in connection with its voice and vote in [the names of several multilateral banks like IMF], shall advance the cause of human rights, including by seeking to channel assistance toward countries other than those whose governments engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.*" Application of this law to the Salvadorean junta would deny it the several hundred million dollars in aid that it has received or stands to receive from the IMF, Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank, and so on.

With reference to El Salvador in particular, there are two bills pending before Congress which demand the broadest possible support from the left and progressive community in this country. House Bill 1509, the so-called Studds Bill (after its initiator, Rep. Gerry Studds of Massachusetts), seeks to prohibit military assistance, sales, and credits to the junta in El Salvador. As of this writing, the Studds Bill has been endorsed by some 90 Representatives. Senator Kennedy has a similar bill in the Senate (S 728) which, however, allows for resumption of aid to the junta in the event it is able to clean itself of human rights violation charges. The Kennedy bill is thus more open to interpretation than HB 1509. Both bills are, in the lingo of Washington lobbyists, seeking co-sponsorship, that is, are not being brought to the floor presently. These bills do, however, have the potential of shifting congressional opinion on El Salvador, especially if constituency oppositim to U.S. involvement continues to mount.

Reagan's strategy for legitimizing continued U.S. involvement and possible direct intervention in El Salvador was put forward by Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Interamerican Affairs, in a speech to the World Affairs Council on July 16. He called for "a political solution" to the conflict. We have heard this story before: "The Government of El Salvador has announced that it will hold presidential elections in 1983 . . . all parties that renounce violence should be encouraged to participate. . . ." But "we should recognize that El Salvador's leaders will not and should not grant the insurgents through negotiations the share of power the rebels have not been able to win on the battlefield." But, "the search for a political solution will not succeed unless the United States sustains its assistance to El Salvador." Elections, in other words, in which the FMLN and FDR are supposed to demobilize, becoming simply political "parties" like any other, and in which the junta, the U.S., the army, and the death squads hold all the cards. Not surprisingly, the proposal had been roundly rejected by the FDR-FMLN and has found little international backing, except among regimes of the "CIA-Pentagon Archipelago." The Federation of Salvadorean Lawyers has refused to participate in the drafting of the new electoral law. A spokesperson of the Socialist International—which has expressed interest in mediating the conflict—noted: "Elections with death lists of the opposition circulating, in the presence of the U.S. military, is macabre. You might as well hold them in the cemeteries." The sentiment was echoed by the SI's Latin American honcho, ex-President Carlos Andrés Peréz of Venezuela.

Part of the thinking behind the Ender's speech was an attempt to encourage a split in the FDR by holding out an olive branch to its middle-class constituents, particularly the Social Democratic

MNR and the left Christian Democrat MPSC, thus tempting them to abandon their present support for the armed struggle. In this sense, the response of the Socialist International and the subsequent declaration in September by the governments of Mexico and France recognizing the FDR-FMLN as "a representative political force" have been decisive in offsetting the thrust of Reagan's "political solution" initiative.

The recent Pell Amendment in the Senate to the Salvador section of the 1982 omnibus Foreign Aid Bill has been another setback for the Reagan strategy. By a vote of 54 to 42, the Senate made aid to El Salvador conditional on a twice-a-year Presidential certification that the junta was making "significant progress" to end human rights abuses, bring the military under civilian control, implement the agrarian reform, hold free elections, and negotiate with the opposition. These are clearly weak demands, but Reagan had asked Congress not to bind his hands at all on Salvador policy, invited Dnarte to Washington, and lobbied hard for language that would not include the Pell conditions. Jessie Helms subsequently tried to push through a substitute amendment that would make Presidential certification non-binding, but this was narrowly defeated by a vote of 51 to 47. In the opinion of the *Washington Post* (September 25, 1981), the coalition of Democrats and liberal Republicans that lined up behind the Pell Amendment "gave the Administration its clearest foreign policy defeat of the year."

Meanwhile, the junta itself is in danger of collapse from within. *In These Times* reporter David Helvarg writes from San Salvador (ITT, September 2–8, 1981):

> . . . byzantine power struggles and coup rumors continue to swirl around the central government. Ten months ago the power struggle was between hardliners and reform elements in the military. The hardliners won, ousting Colonel Majano, the leader of the reformers, from the junta. Today the struggle is between the Christian Democrats, led by President Jose Napoleon Duarte, and the private sector interests, represented by the Alianza Productiva—the landed oligarchs and industrialists who want to reclaim management of the economy from the military technicians and the politicians of Christian Democracy. . . . While the fighting and power struggles continue, El Salvador's economy has gone into a tailspin with no short-term hope of recovery. . . . The government looks to maintain the balance of payments through increased U.S. aid. . . . Capital flight has totaled more than $700 million since 1978, more than $300 million in the last year alone.

At issue here are the reforms sponsored by the junta, the agrarian reform and the bank nationalizations. Encouraged by the reactionary and pro-business stance of the Reagan administration, the Salvadorean bourgeoisie would like to roll back the territory it conceded during the tenure of the first junta in 1979. To the right of the Alianza Productiva (which is based in El Salvador) is an organization called the El Salvador Freedom Foundation, a lobbying group of those families of the oligarchy that have gone into exile in the U.S. which is influential among conservative circles on Capitol Hill. The other face of the Freedom Foundation is Major Roberto D'Aubuisson and the death squads in El Salvador. They will be Reagan's ace-in-the-hole when and if the junta disintegrates.

Given the tremendous forces brought to bear against it, the FDR-FMLN coalition has shown remarkable powers of unity and endurance. It is currently pursuing a double strategy. On the one hand, through the FMLN guerrillas, it continues to harass and confront the forces of the junta and to defend and consolidate liberated zones inside the country. On the other, it has launched an international diplomatic campaign to delegitimize the junta and U.S. support for it, and has kept lines of communication open with sectors presently attached to the junta (though *not* with the junta itself since the expulsion of Colonel Majano) around the possibility of a Zimbabwe-style transitional arrangement worked out through international mediation of the sort offered by the

Socialist International. Mediation, which the FDR-FMLN is careful to distinguish from negotiations with the junta (claiming it is a virtual puppet of the U.S.), would have to involve the recognition and involvement of the social forces represented by the FDR-FMLN and the implementation of at least the basic demands of the FDR Platform. The "mediation" strategy stems from a recognition of the factors that have for the time being stalemated the fighting and the tremendous human and economic costs an eventually victorious Vietnam-scale war might entail. There have been some indications of tension within the FDR-FMLN between those favoring mediation and those arguing for a long range military defeat of the junta without the concessions to forces currently outside the coalition. The degree of this tension should not be exaggerated, however. Everybody in the FDR-FMLN understands that the armed struggle has to continue in order for any settlement that will place the popular movement in power on the basis of the consensus represented by the FDR Platform. By the same token, the success of the FDR's diplomatic offensive isolates and demoralizes the junta, thus enhancing the military effectiveness of the FMLN's current "armed resistance." In any case, the FDR-FMLN has little choice: the Reagan Administration and the junta have adamantly opposed all negotiation or mediation initiatives. The Enders speech, for example, specifically rules out any dealings with the FDR-FMLN unless they agree to disarm—something that is simply not going to happen.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

U.S. imperialism has always dealt with Central America and the Caribbean as a whole; so do Venezuela and Mexico today, who with their oil revenues are the main rivals to inherit U.S. hegemony in the region. Honduran and Guatemalan troops, ex-members of Somoza's National Guard, and U.S. Green Berets are *already* working with the junta forces against the FMLN, often in "sandwich" maneuvers along the borders; the conflict in El Salvador is *already* escalating into a regional conflict, affecting the whole of Central America and the Caribbean. Some of the key issues at stake in the region in the near future are:

—the likelihood that the Reagan strategy ultimately aims at destabilizing or destroying the Cuban Revolution and the New Jewel Movement in Grenada.

—the future roles in the region of Mexico (presently supporting the FDR and the Sandinistas) and Venezuela (supporting the junta but only against strong opposition from Venezuelan public opinion).

—the defense and consolidation of the Nicaraguan Revolution, politically and militarily strong, but faced with staggering economic problems inherited from the war against Somoza, with the need therefore to placate its own business community and foreign credit sources, and now with a U.S. Administration determined to bring every possible pressure against it.

—the increasingly powerful popular insurgency in Guatemala, developing against repression as brutal as that experienced in El Salvador. A new factor here has been the ability of the Guatemalan guerrilla groups to involve substantial sections of the country's Indian population, something they were unable to do in the 60s.

—the future of Belize (British Honduras) which has just been decolonized by Britain (it was the last surviving British colony besides Hong Kong) and now faces the threat of an invasion by Guatemala. Guatemala's territorial claim on Belize is part of the ideology of its current military government which is also involved in a nasty border conflict with Mexico.

—the tremendous, though little reported, U.S. military and intelligence build-up in Honduras, which is rapidly being converted into a U.S. enclave in the region. This is part of a long range

U.S. strategy to build up the surviving countries of the Central American Defense Treaty (CONDECA)—Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador—into an "Iron Triangle" against revolutionary upsurges in the region.

—the progress of the decolonization and demilitarization of the Panama Canal Zone which is still functioning as the base of the U.S. Southern Command. Linked to this are the effects in Panama of the death of strongman Omar Torrijos in an airplane crash widely rumored to be a CIA job (Torrijos, though he had drifted to the right in recent years, was a populist, a friend of Castro, and a strong supporter of the Sandinistas).

—the current fiscal crisis in Central America's only functioning democracy, Costa Rica. The conservative government there (a supporter of the Salvadorean junta) can no longer service its debt and has so far been unable to get an IMF-type "bail out." This has aggravated class conflict and political intrigue in this normally placid republic, a favorite of U.S. retirees.

—finally, the growing refugee problem in Central America. It is estimated that half a million Salvadoreans (over 10% of the population) have left the country since 1979, 200,000 in the last year alone as a consequence of the intensification of the war in the countryside. Many of these refugees are now in Guatemala and Honduras under constant threat from the military regimes in those countries. Guatemala has its own refugee problem as peasants try to flee military search-and-destroy operations into Mexico. In Honduras, a reactionary U.S. fundamentalist group called World Vision, which reportedly cooperates with ORDEN and the Honduran army, has been bidding to take over the refugee camps from Catholic aid organizations and relocate them in the interior of the country. The U.S. Immigration Service is denying Salvadorean refugees entry along the border with Mexico and has now begun to raid communities of Salvadorean immigrants in the U.S. From Los Angeles alone, some 300 Salvadoreans a week are being deported by direct flight to San Salvador. Many of them face the immediate prospect of detention and "disappearance" on arrival.

SUMMING UP

The curtailment of U.S. and other international assistance to the junta in El Salvador; the achievement of a peace settlement that will bring to power the popular majority represented by the FDR-FMLN; utmost caution against the further Vietnamization of Central America and the threat to Cuba and Grenada—these are issues on which the left and progressive movement in the United States can actually practice international solidarity in a materially effective way, rather than merely posturing about it. In a very real sense, the compañeros of the FDR-FMLN are our contemporaries, come out of the same history of radicalization and struggle we went through in the 60s and 70s. We owe them our help.

For resources (films, slide shows, speakers, literature) and for help in setting up solidarity activity, contact the U.S. Committee In Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) at P.O. Box 12056, Washington, D.C. 20005 (phone 202-887-5019). The Nicaragua and Guatemala solidarity networks are located in the same office. CISPES also has regional offices in Los Angeles (213-483-0979), New York (212-473-4848), Boston (617-492-8699), Chicago (312-227-1632), Texas (512-477-4728), Miami (305-661-8358), and San Francisco (3410 19th St., S.F. 94110). Also: Inter-religious Task Force on El Salvador, 475 Riverside Drive, #1020, NYC 10115 (212-870-3014); Religous Task Force on El Salvador (mainly Catholic), 1747 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009 (202-387-7652).