

THE CHALLENGE TO DEMOCRACY IN CENTRAL AMERICA



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EL SALVADOR: DEMOCRACY UNDER SIEGE

The Beginnings

El Salvador is the principal victim of the Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan efforts in Central America. Much of El Salvador's history has been characterized by repression, social injustice, and governmental corruption. A peasant uprising in the 1930s was violently suppressed. The high population growth rate and a population density greater than India's aggravated Salvadoran social frictions. By the 1960s, the coffee-based economy was growing, aided by the Alliance for Progress and the moderately successful Central American Common Market. This economic upturn of the 1960s, however, helped to create the social forces that define the El Salvador of today.

A military-landowner elite controlled El Salvador's sparse land, confining most of the poor to menial labor, migratory farm work, or urban poverty. In the 1970s El Salvador's Communist party splintered. Breakaway groups—later joined by the Communist party itself—abandoned peaceful political opposition to foment violent revolution as the route to social change. Other political elements, however, continued to believe that social change could be achieved through the political process. Jose Napoleon Duarte and his Christian Democrat Party were at the forefront of this reformist movement. In the 1972 presidential election, Duarte was winning until the military stopped the vote count, declared "their" candidate the victor, tortured and imprisoned Duarte, and then exiled him. This action by the military radicalized many, though Duarte himself retained his faith in democracy.

By 1979, terrorism was widespread as five competing Marxist-Leninist factions carried out assassinations, bombings, and kidnappings for ransom, while private "armies" of the right responded with violence. In July 1979, the broad Sandinista coalition in Nicaragua toppled Somoza. Despite growing violence in El Salvador, the Salvadoran military did not increase repression. Instead, in October 1979, a group of young officers over-

threw the military strongman ruling the country and called for a series of reforms calculated to address the inequities that made El Salvador as ripe a target for Communist guerrillas as Nicaragua had been.

Following the failure of a series of short-lived juntas which spanned the Salvadoran political spectrum, the military eventually requested their former adversaries—the Christian Democrats—to cooperate with them in forming a government. In December 1980, Jose Napoleon Duarte was asked to lead the junta, the same Duarte who had been denied the presidency by the military in 1972.

Social, economic, and political reforms announced by the junta came under attack from the extreme right and the extreme left. An ambitious effort was a land reform program to break the control of the old elite and democratize agricultural production. The extreme right saw the reforms as a threat to their interests; the extreme left knew that agrarian and other reforms would do much to remove the grievances and hatred upon which their "class struggle" depended.

Since the initial reformist movement began, the political base of the right has been narrowed, and the traditional military-landowner alliance has been broken. The "death squads" have been sharply curtailed. Many who resisted the changes of post-1979 have now accepted them. The extreme left, however, has continued its efforts to escalate its unrelenting war against the government. The once-competing indigenous terrorist groups have become a well-armed, well-coordinated guerrilla force that, to a significant degree, is armed and influenced by Cuba and Nicaragua.

Salvadoran Guerrillas and Their Allies

Only days after assuming power, Sandinista officials met with Salvadoran guerrilla leaders in Managua to plan how to continue the Central American struggle.

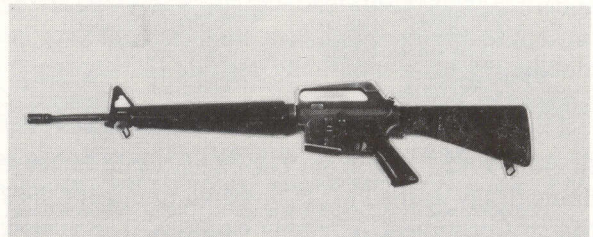
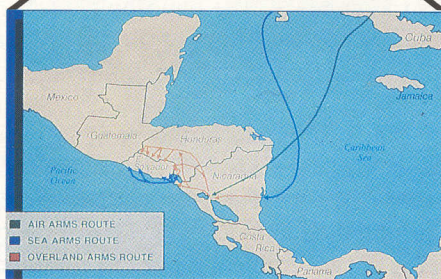
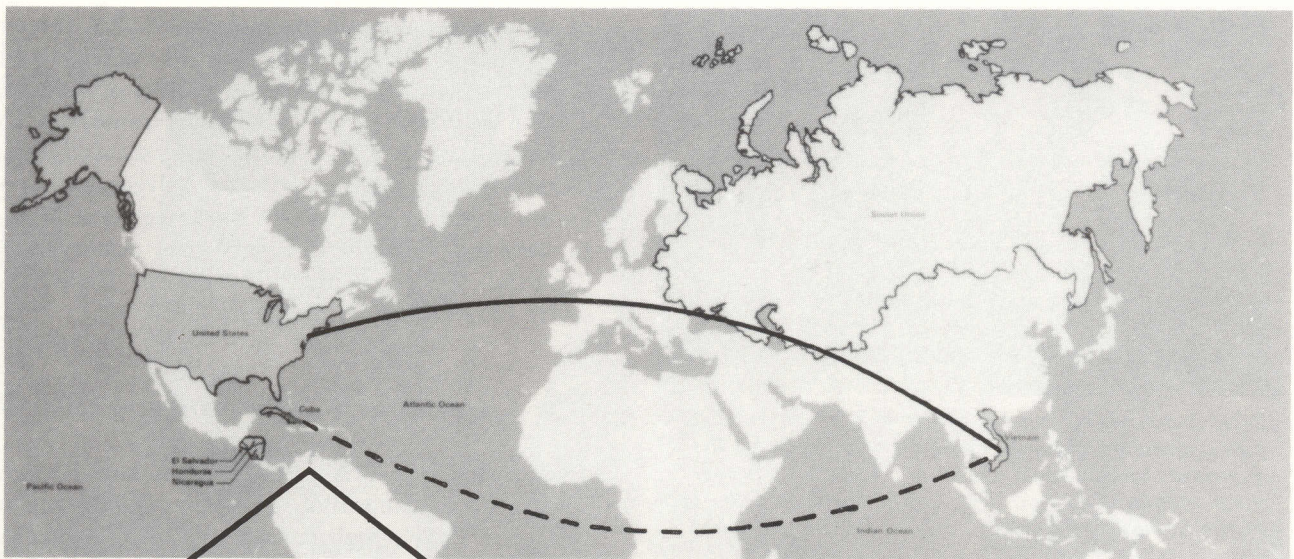


The Salvadoran revolution of 1979 ushered in a series of long overdue social and economic reforms. As a result of the land reform program, more than 25% of El Salvador's rural population either own their land outright, or as members of cooperatives, such as those shown here.

A sizable portion of the millions of dollars raised by Salvadoran terrorists in the late 1970s through ransoms and robberies had gone to assist the Sandinistas in their struggle. Now it was the Sandinistas' turn to help their brothers-in-arms. Overseeing the Central American campaign was Fidel Castro, whose support for the Sandinistas had been indispensable. He called a meeting in Havana in December 1979 at which three of the competing leftist Salvadoran factions pledged to forget their differences. Later, the two other factions joined, and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) was born and named for El Salvador's Communist leader of the 1920s and 30s. Linking the names of Marti and the Sandinistas' patron, Cesar Augusto Sandino, in a Marxist-Leninist struggle was ironic. Sandino, a fervent nationalist, had severed all ties to the "Comintern" (the Moscow-aligned Communist International) and ejected Marti from Nicaragua about 1930 because of the latter's dedication to international communism.⁸⁷ Today Sandino's followers, betraying their patron's nationalist ideals, have joined in a struggle in support of Marxist-Leninist revolution. In the words of the late Cayetano Carpio, patriarch of Salvadoran Communists, the Sandinistas are uniting "the internal struggle with international solidarity",⁸⁸ precisely what Sandino had wished to avoid.

The first arms to be shipped to the Salvadoran guerrillas came from Sandinista stockpiles in Costa Rica. By mid-1980, however, Nicaragua was the logistics center for the Salvadoran guerrillas. In May of that year, at still another meeting in Havana, Castro demanded complete unification of the still rival factions of the Salvadoran guerrillas as the price for Cuban support. After the meeting, Jorge Shafik Handal, leader of the Salvadoran Communist Party now fully integrated into the violent revolution, left Havana for meetings with Soviet officials in Moscow. From there he traveled, with Soviet blessing, to various Communist countries in his quest for help.⁸⁹

In Vietnam, Le Duan, the Executive Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, promised Handal large quantities of captured U.S. weapons from the more than 700,000 M-16 rifles⁹⁰ and other materiel that had been captured by the North Vietnamese Army in 1975. The first of these promised weapons arrived in Cuba in September for shipment to Nicaragua, and then onward to El Salvador. Other Communist countries also began sending weapons, and by November, the guerrillas in El Salvador were being urged to absorb the windfall of military equipment.⁹¹



The government of Vietnam promised the Salvadoran Communist guerrillas large quantities of captured U.S. weapons. This map depicts the probable route of the M-16 rifle shown, which was shipped to Vietnam from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware on 1 July 1968, and was captured on 27 July 1984 in El Salvador. Two thirds of the almost 1,800 M-16s captured, or known to be in guerrilla hands have been traced by serial number to shipments made originally to Vietnam by the United States.

Despite the efforts to hide Communist-bloc support, the sheer volume of shipments forced the Cubans and Sandinistas to be more open in their arms transfers to the FMLN guerrillas in their preparations for a “final offensive” to install a Marxist-Leninist government in El Salvador. Sandino Airport in Managua was closed to traffic from 10 PM to 4 AM for several weeks in late 1980 to accommodate Cuban cargo planes carrying arms, ammunition, and other supplies to Nicaragua. From Nicaragua, the arms went by air, land, and sea into El Salvador. The guerrillas’ “final offensive” began on 10 January 1981. Despite the large quantities of weapons that had poured into El Salvador, the guerrillas failed to overthrow the government because they lacked popular support.

The political complexion of the regime that would have emerged had the FMLN triumphed during its January “final offensive” was described by then U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White in a 15 January

1981 press conference when he said of the guerrillas then fighting to seize control of the country: “Their objective is to install a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in this country....The kind of government that they would install in this country, in my opinion, would be totally subject to the Soviet Union, along the Cuban style.”⁹²

The Guerrilla Challenge: 1981-83

The Carter Administration responded to this Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan-sponsored offensive in El Salvador by sending the Salvadoran government emergency military aid on 16 January 1981. After taking office four days later, the Reagan Administration set out to provide both the economic and military aid necessary to carry out the 1979 reforms of the civilian-military junta. In response to this U.S. assistance, and to keep their movement alive after the failure of the “final offensive,” the guerrillas and their Cuban and Nicaraguan



Salvadorans have gone to the polls four times since 1982, despite continual threats and attacks by the guerrillas. International media and observers judged these elections as free, fair, and representing the will of the Salvadoran people.

patrons decided to concentrate on attacks on “soft” economic targets in order to unnerve the people and undermine their confidence in the government. At the same time, the guerrillas were building their force into mobile, heavily-armed units capable of carrying out large-scale operations.

In early 1982, arms from Nicaragua again increased dramatically as the FMLN prepared to disrupt the 28 March Constituent Assembly elections. The guerrilla efforts did not succeed. More than 80% of the eligible voters turned out despite the guerrillas’ intimidation tactics and attacks on polling locations. As the *Washington Post* editorialized on 30 March 1982:

One understands now why the guerrillas were so eager to destroy, and the political opposition to denounce, the elections in El Salvador. They seem to have sensed that the people would choose to take the way offered by the government to express their pent-up longing to have done with the war and to reconstruct the country....The process seemed fair. The voters came out despite death threats, logistical and procedural obstacles and a history giving little comfort to the notion that elections matter....The insurgents were hurt badly by the elections: they failed to intimidate or dissuade the masses and were substantially spurned by them.⁹³

But this political repudiation did not dissuade the FMLN from its strategy of the “prolonged war.” By mid-1982, they were starting to operate in larger units, using more sophisticated communications equipment and weaponry and conducting operations more typical

of a conventional war than a guerrilla conflict. Government forces in 1983 were clearly on the defensive and the tide appeared to have shifted in favor of the guerrillas. In December 1983—after having trained in Cuba for this special mission—FMLN forces successfully attacked the headquarters of the Salvadoran Army Fourth Brigade in El Paraiso, massacring the defenders. In January 1984 guerrilla saboteurs destroyed the Cuscatlan Bridge on the Pan American Highway, a severe blow to the country’s economy.

The Government’s Response—1984-86

The tide started to turn in early 1984, as the Salvadoran government became more aggressive. In November 1983, the army’s high command had undertaken a reorganization that led to more effective command and control and the assignment of more effective field commanders to key areas. The philosophy underlying this change was to carry the fight to the guerrillas and keep constant pressure on their supply lines.

Progress was continuing in the basic reforms undertaken in 1979-80. By mid-1984, almost 25% of the rural inhabitants of El Salvador owned their own land, or were working their land as co-owners of cooperatives. Politically, the government moved to continue the success generated by the elections of 1982 and the resulting Constituent Assembly. A constitution was signed in 1983. Presidential elections were held in March 1984. Duarte, the reformist Christian Democrat candidate, received a plurality of votes against his main opponent, conservative Roberto D’Aubisson, a former army major. Without a majority, however, the Constitution required a run-off in May. The FMLN, in both March and May, attempted to derail the elections by intimidating voters. As in 1982, they failed. Duarte defeated D’Aubisson in the run-off election. (In the March 1985 legislative elections, Duarte’s Christian Democrats surprisingly wrested control of the Legislative Assembly from the conservative coalition that had led it since 1982.) Duarte’s clear mandate enabled him to initiate a dialogue with the FMLN leadership in October 1984, followed by a second meeting the following month with the guerrillas and their political leadership, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR). At that meeting, the guerrillas expressed their right to carry out sabotage in their “peoples war.” They also reiterated the call for abrogation of the constitution, a repudiation of the elections, an equal role in the government, and a reorganization of the armed forces.⁹⁴



President Duarte of El Salvador initiated peace talks with the guerrillas at La Palma in October 1984. Shown in this picture are the guerrilla political leaders Guillermo Ungo (center, with glasses) and Ruben Zamora (far right, bearded with glasses). The woman in the center wearing a hat is Nidia Diaz, who was captured six months later.

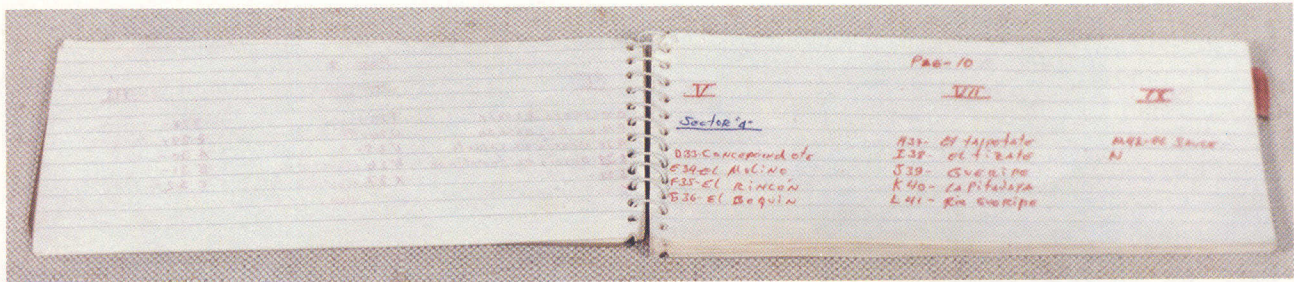
The Logistic Lifeline

The arms, ammunition, and explosives that enable the FMLN to wage war in El Salvador continue to flow in from Nicaragua through an elaborate land, sea, and air network. The land route originates in Nicaragua and passes through Honduras into El Salvador. The notebook and map shown on page 52 illustrates one supply method used by the guerrillas and their Sandinista suppliers. A Salvadoran guerrilla squad was intercepted by Honduran authorities in March 1983. In the ensuing fire fight, the guerrillas were killed. On the body of the squad leader was found a notebook that contained 125 place names with coded identifiers to facilitate the secrecy of the guerrillas' routes starting at the Nicaraguan border. Plotted on a map, these locations traced a corridor from Nicaragua, through Honduras, and into northern El Salvador.

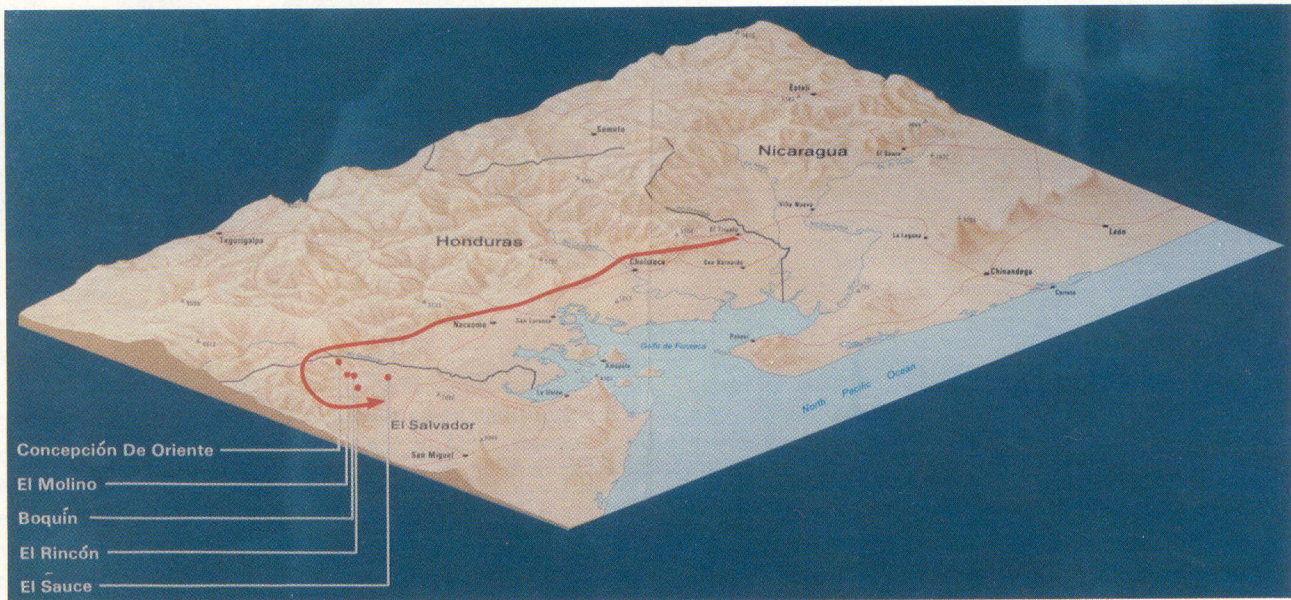
Although the land route from Nicaragua continues to be an important resupply channel, information provided by guerrillas who have defected indicates that the bulk of supplies now come in directly from Nicaragua by sea, across the Gulf of Fonseca, and on to beaches

in the Salvadoran department of Usulután. These maritime deliveries are made at night, and coded radio messages coordinate the shipments, which are placed in caches short distances from the beaches. Guerrilla factions are notified of the arrival of the supplies.

One of the former guerrilla leaders who has provided valuable information on the Nicaraguan supply link is Napoleon Romero, who defected to the government on 11 April 1985. He was a well-known FMLN leader who had fought under the name Miguel Castellanos. He commanded all units in San Salvador of the Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), the largest of the FMLN's factions. Romero stated that the bulk of his organization's supplies came from Nicaragua. He added that much of the training of Salvadoran guerrillas takes place in Cuba (where he himself had been trained) and that "the Sandinistas and the Cubans have set up special organs in Managua for political and logistical matters."⁵⁵ A factor that contributed to Romero's decision to defect was what he described as the "subjection of the FMLN to the tactical and strategic control of the Cubans and Sandinistas."⁵⁶



In March 1983, a notebook was taken from the body of a Salvadoran guerrilla squad leader by the Honduran armed forces. This notebook contained compass headings, codes and 125 place names, aligned with coded identifiers to insure the secrecy of the guerrillas' movements. When plotted on the map below, these locations trace a corridor from Nicaragua to El Salvador.



On 18 April 1985, another important guerrilla leader, Nidia Diaz, was captured carrying the files of her organization, the Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC), one of the factions belonging to the FMLN. Although she never cooperated with the government (and was eventually returned to the guerrillas as part of the exchange for the kidnapped daughter of President Duarte), she acknowledged the authenticity of the documents she had been carrying when she told a national television audience in El Salvador:

*I had the central files with plans, projects, and reports from all areas...all this revealed the work of the organization, the ideas of the FMLN. There were basic documents, war plans, overall plans.... Our structures and everything have been compromised, but since I have not talked, this was due to the (captured) documents.*⁹⁷

Among the documents she authenticated was a 24 November 1983 letter to the "Comrades of the National

Directorate of the FSLN" in Managua which was signed by the General Command of the FMLN Headquarters—Shafik Handal, Joaquin Villalobos, Roberto Roca and Leonel Gonzales. The letter stated that the FMLN leaders

*are in agreement that the electoral period in the United States is the appropriate moment to influence the American electorate. ...We support the current diplomatic initiatives of the FSLN to gain time, to help Reagan's opposition in the United States, and to internationally isolate his aggressive plan toward Nicaragua and El Salvador.*⁹⁸

With respect to the provision of arms from Nicaragua, the FMLN leaders chided the Sandinistas in this letter for not being more generous:

We also consider that, given the level of our confrontation with imperialism and the puppet forces, our process requires a much higher level of logistic assistance. We believe

*that present circumstances are favorable to take daring steps in this direction. (Emphasis added)*⁹⁹

Further evidence of the Salvadoran guerrillas' logistic supply from Nicaragua was revealed by chance in December 1985. A car with Costa Rican license plates was involved in an accident in Honduras. The car was found to have secret compartments containing 7,000 rounds of ammunition, 21 hand grenades, 86 blasting caps, other military supplies, and 39 computer-generated code booklets addressed to Salvadoran guerrilla units. Much of this material was wrapped in recent copies of *Barricada*, the Sandinista political party's newspaper. The code booklets were for use in exchanges of messages between the guerrilla command in Managua and field units in El Salvador. The driver, a member of the pro-Sandinista Communist party of Costa Rica, acknowledged that the car was en route to El Salvador, and that he had taken a similar trip in the same car in July 1985.¹⁰⁰ Secret compartments in vehicles have been used by Nicaragua to shuttle arms and ammunition to the Salvadoran guerrillas since 1980.¹⁰¹

The U.S.-made M-16 rifle has been the basic arm of the Salvadoran guerrillas since the first weapons from Vietnam via Cuba and Nicaragua arrived in 1980. This was before the United States shipped any M-16s to the Salvadoran military. Of the 1779 M-16 rifles captured or known to be in guerrilla hands from captured property records, as of 31 December 1985, two-thirds have been traced by serial number to weapons originally destined for Vietnam.¹⁰² Previously cited documents that were captured in El Salvador in November 1980

revealed that the Government of Vietnam promised to deliver to El Salvador large quantities of captured U.S.-manufactured weapons. Former guerrilla leaders, including Romero, have confirmed that these weapons came to El Salvador from Nicaragua.

Despite all the evidence of their complicity, the Sandinistas continue to deny they have provided arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Foreign Minister D'Escoto went so far as to file a sworn affidavit with the International Court of Justice in April 1984 in which he stated the official position of Managua: "In truth, my government is not engaged, and has not been engaged in, the provision of arms or other supplies to either of the factions engaged in the civil war in El Salvador."¹⁰³ D'Escoto's claims, however, run counter even to statements made by critics of the policy of the United States. For example, a witness for Nicaragua at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) acknowledged that there were arms shipments "in late 1980 and early 1981"¹⁰⁴ and another opponent of U.S. policy claimed that there was "a drastic reduction in arms shipments after early 1982,"¹⁰⁵ implicitly acknowledging that there had been an arms flow until 1982, which the Sandinistas adamantly deny.

The logistic flow from the Sandinistas has indeed been the lifeblood of the FMLN. As early as March 1982, at the time the Sandinista-FMLN connection was attempting to destroy the Salvadoran elections, the Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Congressman Edward P. Boland (D-MA), observed that the Salvadoran insurgents

are well-trained, well-equipped with modern weapons and supplies, and rely on the use



This Soviet-built Lada car was involved in an accident in Honduras on 7 December 1985. It was enroute to El Salvador through Nicaragua, driven by a member of the Costa Rican Communist party. Investigating police found large quantities of military supplies concealed in six hidden compartments.



This photo shows what the car contained: 7,000 rounds of ammunition, 86 blasting caps, 21 grenades, 12 radios and 39 code booklets for use by guerrilla units in El Salvador to communicate with their headquarters in Nicaragua.

*of sites in Nicaragua for command and control and for logistical support. The intelligence supporting these judgments provided to the Committee is convincing.... Contrary to repeated denials of Nicaraguan officials, that country is thoroughly involved in supporting the Salvadoran insurgency.*¹⁰⁶

The Political-Military Situation—1986

The Salvadoran military has continued aggressive operations against guerrilla strongholds. As a result, FMLN strength, which hit a high of 9,000-12,000 in 1982-83, has now dropped to 5,000-7,000.¹⁰⁷ This decline is due to battlefield casualties inflicted by the much-improved Salvadoran armed forces, increasing desertions from guerrilla ranks and the inability of the FMLN to attract Salvadoran youth to the guerrilla cause.

The armed forces have placed strong pressure on the guerrillas in the countryside, while improving—with U.S. assistance—their ability to counter urban terrorism and attacks on the economic infrastructure. Morale and confidence within the armed forces remain high. Throughout 1985 and into 1986, the Salvadoran armed forces consolidated their military gains and continued to improve human rights practices. Employing a mix of large-unit operations and smaller, patrol-size tactics, they are inhibiting the guerrillas' ability to concentrate their forces for large attacks.

To react to this dramatically changed military situation, the FMLN has embarked on a strategy centering on: (1) continuing efforts to destroy the nation's economy; (2) intensifying urban terrorism; and (3) engaging in rural land-mine warfare. This third element has added a particularly vicious aspect to El Salvador's suffering. The indiscriminate placing of land mines has maimed and killed hundreds of civilians in rural areas, most of them children under the age of 15. The FMLN expresses little remorse at this, using its clandestine radio to announce it will continue to use land mines to impede the coffee harvest.¹⁰⁸ Despite criticism of the use of land mines by the Catholic Church, the guerrillas show no sign of ending this tactic.

While stepping up the military tempo against the guerrillas, the Salvadoran government has left open the door for a dialogue that could allow the guerrillas to take their cause to the people by participating in the democratic process. In March 1986, President Duarte announced a major peace initiative. He proposed to

Nicaraguan President Ortega a plan that called for simultaneous talks between the Salvadoran government and the FMLN, and the Nicaraguan government and the UNO. Such negotiations would automatically trigger talks between the United States and Nicaragua. Duarte also proposed a continuing regional dialogue to take place in a permanent Central American parliament. The Sandinistas categorically rejected the entire proposal, with the initial rejection being voiced by Comandante Bayardo Arce during an official visit to Moscow. The Salvadoran guerrillas echoed the Sandinista line. The other countries of Central America, however, gave a solid endorsement to the Duarte plan.¹⁰⁹

The Role of the Catholic Church

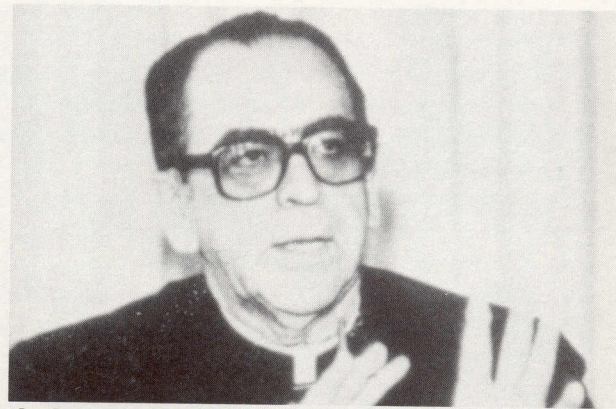
In 1979-80, the Salvadoran Catholic Church was in the forefront of the call for social, economic, and political reform. The leader of the Salvadoran Catholic Church, Archbishop of El Salvador Oscar Romero, was murdered while saying Mass. The guerrillas attempted to create the impression that the Church sided with them. In truth, the Church saw the guerrillas for what they were—increasingly dedicated to the establishment of a Communist government. On the other side of the equation, the Church saw the government as well-intentioned but ineffective in controlling activities of



Cindy Karp/Time Magazine

Because of their declining fortunes in the countryside, Salvadoran guerrillas have turned increasingly to urban terrorism and kidnappings. These have included elected officials and the daughter of President Duarte, shown here with the President after her release for ransom. The Salvadoran Catholic Church referred to this kidnapping as a "cowardly, criminal act that constitutes the most despicable act of blackmail."

death squads and other atrocities such as the December 1980 slaying of four American churchwomen by members of the Salvadoran security forces. The guerrillas attempted to capitalize on the state-church tension by saying that "The Salvadoran Church supports the guerrilla struggle against the regime of President Duarte,"¹¹⁰ a claim the Archbishop's office immediately denied.¹¹¹ The guerrillas later reportedly forged the signature of Romero's successor, Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, on anti-government pamphlets distributed abroad to raise money for the FMLN, once again arousing the ire of the Church.¹¹²



Wide World Photo

Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas of the Diocese of El Salvador, and the other bishops of El Salvador, issued a pastoral letter in August 1985 calling the Duarte government one with popular support, while the guerrillas lack such support and "resort to violence and sabotage as an essential component of their struggle, thus placing themselves in a position of which we cannot approve."

The Salvadoran Church has often been quoted as being opposed to U.S. military aid to the army. The official newspaper of the Diocese of Salvador, however, has commented on pressures being exerted on the United States government by American citizens to cease such military assistance to El Salvador. The *Orientacion* editorial observed that

*although the war is cruel and we long for peace, it is no longer so easy to condemn United States arms shipments. Disarming the Salvadoran army logically would mean furthering a guerrilla victory. We conclude that this would not be just, given how many times the people have already demonstrated their will. This is the truth and we do not understand why other people, entities or persons seek to decide our destiny. No one wants war. We all want peace. The reasonable thing, therefore, would be to ask to halt the flow of arms to the army as well as to the guerrillas. The just thing would be to look for humane and reasonable mechanisms with which to achieve that peace, without having to resort to arms.*¹¹³ (Emphasis added)

*on the other side, are the FDR/FMLN, who arrogate to themselves a representativeness of the people which they cannot certify and who, in addition, resort to violence and sabotage as an essential component of their struggle, thus placing themselves in a position of which we cannot approve.*¹¹⁴

The Catholic Church in El Salvador consistently calls for dialogue and condemns violence from both sides. It remains a trusted and credible intermediary between the government and the guerrillas. It has supported the reforms it sees as having helped transform El Salvador from the explosive 1979-80 period to the more hopeful era of the present. In reviewing the political alignment in their country in 1985, the bishops, in an 8 August pastoral letter, stated:

We have, on one side, a constitutional government, endorsed by the massive turnout at the voting urns in four successive elections, which have been practically a repeated 'referendum' in favor of democracy; and,

The Immediate Future

Despite the progress of the last six years, El Salvador's future is precarious. The Soviets and Cubans are determined to assist Nicaragua in maintaining the flow of arms, ammunition, land mines, and explosives to the Salvadoran guerrillas. Although their fortunes have wavered over the last two years, the guerrillas retain the ability to carry out sabotage on an extensive scale and to conduct major attacks on Salvadoran military installations. Demolition experts continue to destroy electric pylons that provide power throughout the country. In the closing months of 1985, they emphasized the destruction of the coffee crop. The use of land mines is an acknowledged tactic of the guerrillas to hinder this harvest, upon which El Salvador is so dependent. This form of economic warfare is taking a serious toll. Unemployment is over 40%, in large part due to the guerrillas' unrelenting destruction of the economy. Inflation is currently running at over 30% per year. Ironically, many of the Duarte administration problems are products of the success of the last few years. Labor unions are now increasingly restive, in part because the Communists are infiltrating and agitating. In previous years, the labor unions' activities would have been



The Salvadoran guerrillas have concentrated their efforts on destroying the economy of the country. Since 1980, this destruction has amounted to more than \$1 billion, with bridges and the all-important electrical system key targets.

sharply curtailed by authoritarian military governments. The political opening that has defined El Salvador's success has quite naturally encouraged people to demand more of their political leaders. Similarly, the success of the armed forces since early 1984 has forced the guerrillas to shift to urban terrorism, to increase kidnappings (including that of elected officials and the President's daughter), bombings, and other actions designed to terrorize the population and undermine confidence in the government. These actions by the guerrillas symbolize their determination to continue the war against the elected government by whatever means they deem necessary. The Salvadoran military, organized to defeat a guerrilla force in the field, knows it is less able to confront the new threat in the cities, although it is adjusting to this new challenge. The FMLN's tactics are designed to provoke the military into a return to the repressive tactics of previous years.

Despite the violence and economic problems confronting it, El Salvador is on far more solid footing in 1986 than it was as recently as three years ago, and certainly better than in the volatile 1979-80 period. El Salvador remains the principal focus in the region of the Soviet-Cuban connection, with Nicaragua the linchpin of Communist strategy in Central America. The Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan offensive is not limited to El Salvador, however, for all of Central America is the target.