

El Salvador leader charges government oppression



RUBEN ZUMORA

Ruben Zumora, representing the Democratic Revolutionary Front, spoke in Eugene last week. Dr. Zumora is an attorney and political scientist, a former lecturer at the National University of El Salvador and the Catholic University of El Salvador. He was Chairman of the Department of Political Science at the National University of El Salvador and a member of the Commission of Peace and Justice of the Catholic Church. He is a former member of the Christian Democratic Party and currently is one of seven members of the Political and Diplomatic Commission of the FMLN and the FDR.

Following are excerpts from Dr. Zumora's talk. "We are a small country - 25,000 square kilometers, about 4.5 million people, an underdeveloped country that has been under the social, economic and political control of a small group of families that we call in El Salvador, the Oligarchy.

They are the owners of most of our land - the best land. They are the owners of the banks; they are the owners of the foreign commerce, and therefore they control the country. As well, El Salvador

has the dubious record of having the longest military regime in the world - 50 years of uninterrupted military rule in El Salvador, since 1931.

In this period, at the end of 1979 there was a general crisis - a social, economic and political crisis. This crisis was attempted to be solved through a *Coup de etat* that in October, 1979 took place. The objectives were the democratization of the country and social reform.

The democratic - civilian sectors of El Salvador went into the government when they saw that may be the last opportunity to have a peaceful way out of the crisis.

But very soon the democratic sector understood and came to realize that there was not a way out because the military continued with the real control. The military continued with a pattern of repression that is traditional in El Salvador and the attempts at social reform were broke by the military and the Oligarchy.

In frustration those people resigned at the beginning of January last year and that's how the present government of the military and the Christian Democrats came to power.

What is the composition of the government? This government is made up of an alliance of the armed forces of El Salvador and a sector of the Christian Democrat Party, because the majority of the party renounced that party at the beginning of last year because they were not in agreement to go again into the government with the military.

This government has been implemented a model of repression that we call in El Salvador "repression con reforma." That means "repression with reform," or the "reformation of death."

The name is very appropriate because we can see how clearly - during last year - month by month, week by week, the level of repression in the country increased. Beginning of the year there were around 10, 12 people killed - assassinated - per day. Now we are around 45 people assassinated per day in El Salvador.

Now in El Salvador there are no

civil rights for the population. There are no free newspapers. The last one in opposition to the government was destroyed by the security forces a week ago and its personnel put in jail. Our comrades from the trade union movement have said there are no rights for unionization in El Salvador. The government of El Salvador is characterized as being the most cruel and brutally repressive government in the whole of our history.

That twelve thousand and seventy-five people were killed in one year is just a demonstration of the character of this government.

Here in the United States it has been said that the situation in El Salvador is an extreme right and an extreme left that are fighting each other and destroying each other and that in the center is the government trying to advance a process of reform.

These have been the ideas that the State Department and most of the media have been selling to the American people. But if we look at the facts we can see that the situation is completely different. There is no such a thing as a right wing terrorist group that is different from the government. On the contrary, right wing terrorism, assassination by death squads, are a full part, an integral part, of the strategy of the government.

Everybody in El Salvador knows that the people who commit these barbarous assassinations, killing and torturing people in civilian clothes, are the same people who during the day wear uniforms as policemen, as members of the security forces, as members of the Army.

This is the condition in El Salvador. If it is not, why is the government saying it is combating the right wing element and never up to now - has put in prison, never up to now they have killed one right wing terrorist in El Salvador?

This is the situation, but the government tries to cover itself with a window dressing of reform and tries to justify in front of the democratic sector, in front of the American people and other people of

the world that they are a good government because they are doing reform. But if we look at the reform we are going to see what is the real nature of this reform.

Let's take only the agrarian reform being represented by the State Department as the most radical agrarian reform is all of Latin America. A recent study made by Foxfarm of the US has shown that the agrarian reform of El Salvador affects only 15 percent of the arable land of the country, that this agrarian reform excludes 60 percent of the rural population. It excludes all of the landless peasants. This agrarian reform has not touched what in El Salvador is the land of the Oligarchy - coffee production. Coffee production is mostly developed between 100 and 500 sectors and that range of land has been not touched at all. That means more than 60 percent of coffee production has been excluded from the agrarian reform.

This agrarian reform is not addressing the fundamental land problem. It has been linked with repression in the countryside. Maybe El Salvador is the only case in recent history which at the same time that the government was declaring the agrarian reform, the peasants were fleeing from the countryside to the towns. They were leaving the agrarian reform. This is not because the peasant doesn't want land. The peasant wants land. The problem is the peasant values most his own life than land. And they knew from experience that the agrarian reform is being used to for repressing the peasants in the countryside.

Let me quote from the resignation of the undersecretary of agriculture who was the man most important in drafting the agrarian reform. He resigned three weeks after the agrarian reform was beginning to be implemented. "I resign from my position because I believe it was useless to continue in a government not only incapable of putting an end to violence but a government that itself is generating the political violence through repression. agrarian reform began what we saw

was a sharp increase in official violence against the very peasants who are the supposed beneficiaries of the processes."

The present government is not a centrist government. It is a very right wing government. It is an anti-democratic government. It is the most repressive government that we've had in all our history, and it is an illegitimate government and therefore we have the right to rebel against that government.

Who are the rebels of El Salvador? The alternative to the Christian Democrat - military government is the Democratic Revolutionary Front. The FDR has come from a process of unity that never before has been achieved in the political history of El Salvador. The FDR is composed of all the popular organizations, all the revolutionary organizations, of all the democratic political parties, the Social Christians, the movement of Independent Professionals and Technicians that is economists, lawyers, engineers, - that means the best technical equipment that our country has. In the Front are all the trade unions - 92 percent of all the organized workers; an organization of the private sector, an organization of trucks and busses. That means the front is composed of the whole of the political spectrum.

The Oligarchy is not in the Front because for it is very clear that we are fighting against the Oligarchic system, that the system is responsible for the suffering, for the poverty, for the missing of our people.

As a show of proof of our unity we have put forward a program for a democratic revolutionary government.

We call for a democratic society. We want in our country, for the first time in the whole of our history, that human rights will be respected in El Salvador. Maybe for you who can come more or less freely in the street this is not so valuable, but for us El Salvadoreans we know that sometimes when we leave home we don't know if we will come back home again because if we

find the police we are going to be finished. It is very important to have human rights in El Salvador.

A program that calls for respect for the civil liberties of the population - for the freedom of religion and an end to persecution against the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches.

Our program in the economic and social theater call for a profound socio-economic reform, an agrarian reform, a real nationalization of the financial commerce, and to form a system of mixed economy. That means an economy that will function with three basic sectors. A state sector - run by the government - the banks are going to be included. A social sector that is going to be run by the people themselves while producing there, especially in the area of the agrarian reform - a system of cooperations, self-management, or co-management. We are going to develop an agrarian reform that will serve the needs of our peasants and allow them to participate fully, without fear, in the construction of the country. Finally, a third sector, that is going to be a privately owned sector. Our program calls for the defense and help for the medium and small size enterprise.

In the international area our program calls for a strict policy of non-alignment. We believe that the only solution for countries like our country - a small one and underdeveloped - to survive in such a contradictory world now is to follow a policy of non-alignment... We don't want to be servant of one superpower, neither of another superpower.

Our program calls for building an army of new type. We believe it is necessary to have completely new security forces. There are so many torturers, so many assassins, so many violators of human rights that it is impossible to reform. Therefore, we call for a new security force that are going to be there protecting the people. An Army is to be made of the democratic officers that now exist in the Army and the freedom fighters.

Our cause is just, we will win.

The 'White Paper'

A report called "Communist Interference in El Salvador" was carried to Mexico and the nations of Western Europe on February 13th, and released to the American press on February 23rd.

The report begins, "This report presents definitive evidence of the clandestine military support given by the Soviet Union, Cuba, and their Communist allies to Marxist-Leninist guerrillas now fighting to overthrow the established government of El Salvador." The evidence drawn from captured guerrilla documents, and war material and corroborated by intelligence reports, underscores the central role played by Cuba and other communist countries, military direction, and arming of insurgent forces in El Salvador.

"The United States considers it of great importance that the American people and the world community be aware of the gravity of the actions of Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other Communist States who are carrying out what is clearly shown to be a well-coordinated, covert effort to bring about the overthrow of



Guns reportedly captured from El Salvador guerrillas.

El Salvador's established government and to impose in its place a Communist regime with no popular support."

The State Department's case is

based on documents it claims were captured from guerrillas by the El Salvadoran military. The typewritten page shown, lists equipment that was supposed to be delivered by various socialist nations - Vietnam, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Bulgaria. Also pictured on various rifles and small arms, mostly U.S. made, but including Israeli, Belgian and German rifles.

Additional "evidence" is what is reported to be a letter written to Fidel Castro, signed by the three leaders of the El Salvador Freedom Movement, thanking him for "the help of your party comrades... by signing an agreement which establishes very solid bases upon which we begin building coordination and unity of our organizations." Also, several guerrilla leaders met diplomats of the German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria, Poland, Vietnam, Hungary, Cuba and the Soviet Union in Mexico City, and "made certain requests (possibly for arms)."

This evidence has been presented to the U.S.'s traditional allies, but has been rejected by all but Great Britain and France.

The FMLN- FDR response

Exerpts from the response to the "White Paper" by the FMLN-FDR:

The FMLN-FDR emphatically denies that it has received arms from the governments of Vietnam, Ethiopia, Cuba, Russia or any other government. It has taken the Salvadoran people more than ten years to acquire and develop all the resources which now allow it to successfully carry out its political-military struggle against tyranny. In the course of these years, the means used by the Salvadoran people to acquire their instruments of war have been very diverse. Many of the arms have been manufactured by our own combatants. Others, of U.S. manufacture have been recovered by our people's army in combat against the army of the Salvadoran government. Others have been acquired on the international market, depending on a broad solidarity of peoples and organizations throughout the world to facilitate such transactions. To involve governments in the provisioning of resources for the Salvadoran peoples' forces is something which reveals, besides bad intent, an excessively simplistic analysis of the facts on the part of the United States government.

Until now, the only incontrovertible truth before the international conscience is the growing provision of arms and military training with which the United States government has helped the army of Christian Democratic-Military Junta of El Salvador. This is reality and not mere speculation, a reality which the United States Government has created and continues to create each time in greater proportions, being fully aware of the fact that its military aid is used to kill El Salvador's civilian population and North American Nuns.

For our part, we are open to political solutions which do not betray the interests of our people. But we are not intimidated by the threats of the United States. Our peoples' will to struggle and the solidarity of the peoples of the world will once again defeat unjust imperialist aggression.

It is the United States, not the government it accuses, which is really intervening in the internal affairs of El Salvador and threatening the peace of the continent. The Reagan administration, therefore, lacks the moral credibility to accuse other governments of providing military aid to the Salvadoran people's forces.

By pointing this out, we do not detract from the legitimate right which the Salvadoran people have to avail themselves of support from any people or government to carry out their just struggle, as much as the political and diplomatic levels as in any other dimensions of this same struggle. The fact that we have this right, nevertheless, does not mean that we have used it to secure military aid from governments which are in solidarity with our struggle. To do so would have meant that we would be serving up on a platter to U.S. imperialism a reason to launch accusations of all kinds, which as a matter of fact, is now happening. They turned to launching such accusations when

the moment had arrived to justify a more direct and massive involvement in the internal conflict of El Salvador. It makes no sense to think that we would have fallen into the error of compromising ourselves and compromising other governments, when actually we have depended on many other possibilities to resolve our logistical problems in the military sphere.

The lack of credibility of the United States government, as well as the inaccuracy and inconsistency of the evidence by which it is attempting to justify its accusations against the governments mentioned, turn the maneuver of the State Department into a genuine insult to the intelligence and dignity of the peoples and governments to whom its diplomatic delegation has been sent. . . . As was to be expected, the first reactions of those governments give evidence of their correct vision of the Salvadoran conflict and their growing lack of confidence in the rationality of United States foreign policy.

