

# 1984 critical year for El Salvadoran politics

1984 will be a decisive year for El Salvador—increased political and military strength of the FMLN—FDR, the increased military and economic aid provided the government by the United States and the elections scheduled for March are among the decisive elements.

In 1983, FMLN forces inflicted 7,282 casualties on the military and captured 1,757 prisoners who were later turned over to the Red Cross. They captured 3,511 rifles, 138 artillery pieces, 84 machine guns and a large stock of ammunition and other goods.

The FMLN now controls one third of the country, including most of the eastern region. Recent operations, such as the capture of El Paraiso Garrison and provincial capitol, Chalatenango, and the destruction of Cucatlan Bridge and many others, demonstrate the high level of organization and training of the revolutionary forces. No longer mere guerrilla bands, the FMLN now has a military structure that will form the basis of the new Revolutionary Armed Forces once victory is won.



The "liberated zone" is provided with medical care, hospitals, schools, agricultural projects, and a developing popular government.

The fact that the FMLN has the battlefield initiative while there is growing demoralization among government troops in spite of the increasing participation of U.S. "advisors", is a clear signal that the situation is tipping in favor of the liberation movement.

The Reagan Administration is at-

tempting to dismiss the FMLN gains, but a report sent to Congress on January 16th, admitted that the military conflict had reached a stalemate.

The U.S. has provided more than \$200 million in military aid to El Salvador in the last two years and the Kissinger Commission report calls for \$400 million more in the next two years.

The U.S. goal of a military victory was reaffirmed when a document drawn up by the Panamabased U.S. Southern Command was made public. It calls for forming a new army in El Salvador with 52 counterinsurgency units and seven rapid-reaction battalions. This could bring total troop strength up to nearly 50,000 men. The plan was masterminded by General Woerner, who was assigned by Southern Command chief Paul Gormen to supervise military aid in Central America. He predicted a possible victory towards the end of the 1985 fiscal year if \$1.4 billion could be earmarked for El Salvador in the 1984 and 1985 fiscal years.

The government, realizing that such funds would not be appropriated by Congress, considered the U.S. to be left with four options: 1.) loose the war; 2.) prolong the bloody stalemate for two more

years; 3.) change policy and seek a peaceful solution; and 4.) send in U.S. troops.

In the meantime, El Salvador is planning elections for president and vice-president in March. There is no reliable electoral roll and no electoral law. The U.S. is considering sending in 1,500 U.S. troops to guard the polls during the election.

The most likely recipients of U.S. support are Christian Democrat Jose Nepoleon Duarte and murder and death-squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson.

The FMLN-FDR will not participate in the elections. In addition to the obvious fact that their candidates would be targets for murder, the FMLN-FDR sees no valid roll for the elections. "The elections will not change the nature of the conflict since they stem from the need of the political parties and the United States. They are a means to paper over the differences between ARENA (D'Aubuisson's party) and the Christian Democrats," said Mario Aguinada of the FMLN-FDR political commission.

The FMLN-FDR stressed that "before, during and after" the elections, they will continue their political and military drive to secure a negotiated solution to the Salvadoran conflict.

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# Soviet transition not mysterious

In recent weeks, the U.S. media has treated the American public to its own version of the change of leadership in the Soviet Union brought about by the death of Yuri Andropov. The commentary was filled with the "mystery of succession", struggles between "old men" and "younger men", struggles between the Communist Party and the military for control, creating an impression that Soviet leadership is determined by a few autocrats at the top and that Soviet policy hinges on the political intrigues and successes of one man—the winner. News commentators based their assumptions and predictions on such items as the similarities and differences between events following the death of Brezhnev and that of Andropov.

Byron Johns, chairman of the Oregon U.S.-Soviet Friendship Council, said the transfer of leadership in the Soviet Union is neither mysterious nor complicated.

Following the death of Andropov, who was both General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Chief of State, a plenary session of the Party Central Committee was held and it elected Konstantin Chernenko as its General Secretary. Chernenko had been recommended by the Politbureau (Politbureau), which is composed of 14 persons elected by the Central Committee. Thus, he became the leader of the nation's political party.

Why does the Soviet Union have one political party? Johns explained, "In the crucial time after the revolution, the Communist Party was faithful to the people. It advanced new opportunities for the people and stood for independence of the Russian nation and those minority nations that elected to become part of it. The other parties sought to betray the people and make common cause with the invading capitalist powers." Many socialist countries—including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic—do have more than one political party, he said.

The key role of the Party is to develop policy. Party policies and recommendations serve as guidelines for government but do not become law unless adopted by the appropriate state bodies. This is somewhat similar to the process in the United States, where the Democratic and Republican Parties develop platforms to serve as guidelines for lawmaking, and in Great Britain when the Labor and Conservative Parties play that role.

Contrary to popular belief in the U.S., the U.S.S.R. does have a constitution, a system of government, and a system for the transfer of state leadership.

The highest state body in the U.S.S.R. is the Supreme Soviet (Council), made up of two bodies, Johns explained. The Soviet of the Union is allotted representation according to population and expresses the will of the people. The Soviet of Nations is made up of representation of the minority nations so all ethnic groups are represented and it looks after the interests of the national groups. (The U.S.S.R. includes fifteen sovereign and autonomous states and many

autonomous regions and areas). Each body has 750 elected members.

The Supreme Soviet is made up of working people who meet twice a year and carry on their regular jobs. Approximately 32.5 percent are women; 21 percent are under 30; 28.3 percent are not Party members. Between sessions, the work is carried on by numerous commissions and by the Presidium.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet—39 members elected by a joint meeting of both bodies and resembling the British cabinet—is the presiding body. The elected chairman of the Presidium is the chief of state.

It is usually the case, Johns said, that the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Secretary General of the Party are the same person. This was true with Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Andropov.

The myth-making by U.S. journalists is far from reality, Johns said. "Anyone who reaches such a pinnacle of power and influence as the Presidium certainly has an ego. But among the Soviet people I have met who were in that position, the evidence of that ego is certainly muffled. It is certainly not what you see in the U.S. where all kinds of privileges and corruptions are the order of the day. You would not see that in any persons in high position in the Soviet Union—he would be out of office very quickly. All those I have met I consider very upright, honest persons with high ideals. Any attempt to subvert the will of the majority and they would be out."

A case in point was the removal of Nikita Khrushchev. "It became obvious that he was not qualified," Johns said. "He was intelligent but indifferent to technology. He made costly mistakes, especially in agriculture. The Soviet Union's agronomists—who share their knowledge with the public—began to complain. The newspapers were flooded with letters to the editor, complaining about Khrushchev's leadership." It was not long before the Supreme Soviet yielded to public pressure and removed Khrushchev. "This is verification that the policies and mandates are not made at the top but originate in the local and provincial Soviets and represent the people."

The U.S. gossip about improving of U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations now that Andropov is dead is unrealistic, Johns said. "That question does not depend on a life or death; what destroyed the arms talks was the U.S. deployment of new missiles in Europe. What can restore talks is for the U.S. to restore the balance between the U.S. and Soviet nuclear forces.

"Chernenko has long been a Party activist. He is a member of the Politbureau and the Presidium. His statements have been sensitive and to the point. He will bring no change in policy because policy is made by the Supreme Soviet and the Party Congress, not by one man.

"The purpose of gossip about Chernenko changing things is to distract the public. The danger grows daily with the arms race and gossip-type articles predicting changes, now that Andropov is dead, contribute to the arms race's attracting attention away from

# IF YOU THINK HEAT PUMPS ARE A LOT OF HOT AIR,



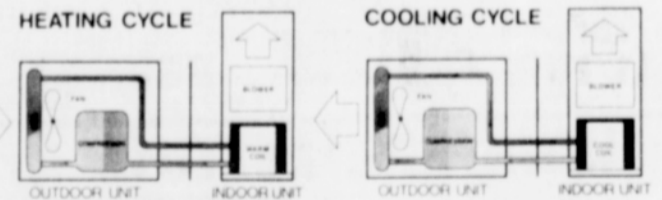
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