

# A DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION FOR EL SALVADOR

by Joaquin Villalobos

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Any discussion of political reality in El Salvador today must be premised on two obvious and widely accepted facts. The first is the collapse of the U.S.-backed Christian Democratic government. The second is the need for a negotiated political settlement of the current conflict.

President Jose Napoleon Duarte has failed because his economic and political policies responded to the political demands of the United States - not to the real internal needs of El Salvador. As a result, he has only succeeded in accelerating the political decomposition of his own administration.

A negotiated settlement that will stabilize El Salvador can be achieved only after a significant change in the correlation of forces and only through internal agreements and pacts expressing the interests of diverse social and political sectors. An understanding of this fact provides the point of departure for the revolutionary program of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

Revolutions reflect the concrete reality in which they develop. Accordingly, each revolutionary process must develop its own concepts and models. To understand the Salvadoran revolutionary effort the historical context in which it developed must be understood.

Some observers fear that the FMLN's revolutionary program responds more to an ideological scheme or definition than to objective conditions in El Salvador. It has been suggested that a revolutionary triumph in El Salvador would mean the implementation of radical plans. Some have even spoken of the danger of a regime like that of the deposed Cambodian dictator Pol Pot. The Reagan administration itself raised the specter of an FMLN that is harsh and radical. As a result, forces that otherwise accept and understand El Salvador's need for revolutionary change feel compelled to support a policy of aggression in Central America; for they do not see any way to reconcile the internal reality, which seems to argue for change, with the external reality, which, through the

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geopolitical framework facing Central and Latin America, sets constraints.

The Reagan administration, as one of its major arguments against a change in U.S. policy, contended that revolution in El Salvador poses a danger to U.S. national security. Another geopolitical argument is that a revolutionary victory could not be consolidated because it would not end conflict in the country but would bring another

war—namely, a counterrevolutionary war led by the United States against El Salvador.

Yet all the allegations of supposed radicalism or geopolitical danger rest on a superficial analysis of both the FMLN and the internal and external correlation of forces that have influenced its development. In responding to allegations, the FMLN knows that it cannot simply appeal to good faith or cite its speeches and words in an effort to gain acceptance of its program. It must show that the internal and external historical context of the country requires that revolutionary change in El Salvador be based on a broad and open political model and that the thinking of the FMLN takes into account this determining factor. Otherwise the FMLN will make a mistake. It will isolate itself from the forces that are vital in bringing the country profound, serious, and realistic change and that are needed to maintain international support.

Revolutionary movements face the challenge of maintaining an objective analysis of reality in their countries, rather than falling back on ideologically motivated "wishful

dreams." "When revolutionary actions are inspired by ideological goals more than by concrete or historical realities, they lapse into dogmatism. The revolutionary movement generally maintains a permanent struggle against dogmatism. To recognize the danger of dogmatism is not a matter of concessions but rather is inherent in the character of revolutionary change. It is not a question of meting out the revolution in doses to make it acceptable. Rather, it

is a question of recognizing that current conditions are different from those that prevailed during the revolutionary struggle in other countries in different eras.

It would be dishonest and ridiculous to deny the influence of Marxism and Leninism within the FMLN. First, few or none would believe such a denial; and second, it would not be true. Further, we revolutionaries cannot deny the Marxist-Leninist influence simply to defend ourselves against retrograde anticommunism.

In general, the middle class in most societies is bombarded with a series of beliefs about revolutionaries and revolutions that not only is motivated by a concern for certain material interests but also is influenced by an ideological burden with respect to what Marxism-Leninism actually is—namely, a theory within the social sciences.

U.S. society, in particular, is saturated with anticommunist ideology and beliefs that prevent its members from seeing reality. Mistaken policies are the result. Ideology drives the United States to invest more resources in the struggle against the hungry than in the effort to end hunger. But it is a serious historical error to see one's own society as a universal model and to reject totally other models in a world with great complexity among societies, each with distinct historical determinants, each with its own pattern of development. The influence of Marxism-Leninism as a theory of social science is already universal. This is accepted in the socialist camp as well as in the capitalist world. The FMLN understands Marxism-Leninism as a scientific discipline for analyzing reality and as an organizational theory for struggle. But we do not convert the tenets of Marxism-Leninism into dogma that might isolate us from reality. Such an approach would contradict the requirements of a scientific approach to political

work. In other words, the FMLN argues not about ideological theory or definitions but about reality.

This approach does not mean that in the past revolutionary ideas have not been dealt with in an ideological manner. But this fact is explained as part of the development of these ideas and as a necessary defensive reaction responding to attempts to block their dissemination. Today, however, social communication is highly developed in the world, and it is increasingly difficult to block the circulation of ideas everywhere. Each revolution must adapt to the realities it faces and build on this basis its own thinking.

It is an error to presuppose a given political behaviour on the part of a person or a party on the basis of discourse alone without

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considering the factors that have determined the behaviour in question. For example, it is a mistake to assume that political actions of "communists" are automatically untrustworthy or that revolutionaries who proclaim moderate intentions, once in power, will turn totally "communist." Such an approach is subjective and unrealistic. An examination of the context in which the FMLN operates, of the development of its political thinking to date, of the practices it has followed, and of the course events will most likely follow in the future reveals the lack of substance behind allegations about the radical nature of the FMLN.

#### The FMLN's Adaptability

In fact, throughout its history the FMLN has shown a remarkable ability to adapt to changing situations. This adaptability explains

why it has been able to resist advance, and renew its struggle and political thinking. In the beginning the Salvadoran revolutionary movement held very ideological positions, but it was influenced by a multiplicity of currents and debates within the revolutionary movement worldwide. Later it passed through a period of strong ideological struggle and faced some very critical moments. Now it has emerged with a new sense of maturity. It has learned from experience.

The FMLN, responding to reality, has displayed great ability to maintain political influence among the masses and to face up to the challenge of political debate. In that sense, it is important to note such aspects of the FMLN as its strong Christian base, its integration of women, its self-management policies among the popula-

tion, its ability to engage in dialogue, its pragmatic proposals for negotiation and de-escalation of the war, its solid unity and alliances, and, above all, its ability to make wise use of crucial historical turning points and to adapt to new situations. Also important is the significant foreign recognition it enjoys. Its level of representation abroad underscores the FMLN's ability to maintain relations with a wide array of political thought.

Some observers attempt to sketch the future program of the FMLN by extrapolating from the apparent radicalism of some FMLN military actions, such as sabotage and mine laying. It must be asked, however, whether such radical actions—which are a matter of current tactics and are not part of the movement's historical program—could not be explained more by the level of U.S. intervention

in the conflict that by a radical political will on the part of the FMLN.

The number of Salvadorans slaughtered through genocide now totals about 70,000. One million people have been displaced. The United States has spent \$3 billion and deployed its technology to ravage El Salvador with fire and death. In such circumstances it is difficult if not impossible to expect the FMLN to wage a successful war and deal with the U.S. intervention through a Robin Hood type of war. The tactics adopted have proved effective in halting and defeating an unjust and immoral aggression. These tactics have proved effective to defend a broad, democratic, and realistic historical goal.

The United States has sought to portray the FMLN as a terrorist movement. But the FMLN does not have roots in religious or nationalist protest that would force it to turn to fanaticism. The FMLN is not a terrorist organization. Its military practices seek to win the support of society, not to intentionally and premeditatedly cause civilian casualties. Conversely, the armed forces advised by the United States do undertake such actions when they carry out bombings and when they massacre thousands and thousands of people in order to eliminate and cow the social base of the guerrillas. In international forums, including the United Nations, the FMLN has defended its actions politically. It has taken the responsibility for its actions within the context of the circumstances of the war. At the same time, it has presented pragmatic proposals to de-escalate the war and reduce the harm to the civilian population, an approach that has been rejected by the government.

Those who doubt the FMLN's good will on this point should ask, Could the FMLN continue its struggle, build its strategy, and maintain its social base, alliances, and inter-

national recognition if it were unable to display in its program great political and military flexibility? It is difficult to believe that the FMLN, when victorious and implementing its revolutionary



JOAQUIN VILLALOBOS

model, will ignore the realities of the country and alter its political practices. It certainly will accept as a fundamental principle that it should not seek either to isolate or to distance itself from popular interests. It will try to take into account other social forces and geopolitical realities to provide balance to its model.

Three major factors establish the context in which El Salvador's revolution will necessarily develop:

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the weakening of U.S. militarism; the geopolitical multipolarity of today's world; and the social composition of forces driving change in El Salvador. Without attempting here to enter into a deep analysis of the United States in today's world, we can only state our belief that there is evidence of a decline in U.S. militarism and a reduction in its capacity for aggression. In our view the United States faces a structural crisis in the imperialist model in the economic realm. The United States is losing its leading role among the world's capitalist economies; this shift has political

effects. At the same time, progress in disarmament provides socialism and other independent poles of authority with greater room to maneuver. This multipolar world both conditions and weakens the U.S. determination to decide what will and will not happen internationally.

In our case there has been a fundamental change in U.S. policy. Since America's defeat in Vietnam, U.S. strategists have adopted the option of low-intensity warfare, which is an effort to maintain a policy of intervention by other means. They recognize that using U.S. troops in El Salvador is not effective or in line with political realities inside the United States. In short, administrations running the Vietnam War had a free hand than those now running the war in Central America. The reduction in militarism and the shift from policies of direct intervention permit revolutionary movements formerly threatened with siege and attrition, and facing reversals, to receive more space to act in the political arena. Although America's policy of empire persists, there is an obvious difference for others between being prepared to defend themselves from the threat of invasion and preparing for certain invasion.

In these new conditions, political confrontation takes on a preponderant role. An open and flexible strategy is required to take power and defend the revolution. It is worthwhile to note that revolutions prior to the one in Nicaragua occurred at a time when imperialism followed a tougher and more aggressive policy and therefore had to be more rigid. The Bolshevik revolution, for example, had to face fascism at the terrible cost of 20 million dead. Revolutionaries were forced to focus all their energies on the effort to survive, an approach that was just and correct for the times.

Still, even today it cannot be said that interventions are over and will not be repeated. Moreover, there are other forms of intervention besides invasion—economic blockades, mercenary armies, and the permanent danger that the United States might take advantage of a moment of temporary weakness, error, or a specific situation to intervene. Nonetheless, the conditions that enabled the United States to intervene in the Dominican Republic in 1965 and Grenada in 1983 or to isolate Cuba from Latin America from the early 1960s no longer exist. The case of U.S. policy in Panama is enlightening in this regard. In that country the Reagan administration had created degree of domestic opposition and temporarily isolated

with revolutionary change, which is inevitable. It has never sought other ways to relate to and influence revolutionary change except through threats and war. Meanwhile, Latin America and Western Europe understand this point. They are open to new realities and different perspectives. They therefore do not allow their foreign policies to be overwhelmed by ideological dictates. The United States is increasingly alone in isolating Cuba and depicting it as a dictatorship. Other countries of the Americas are renewing relations with Cuba and learning to coexist with a system that is not a dictatorship but a people's democracy that has solved a great many of the problems faced by the Cuban people.

The United States thus appears

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it internationally. U.S. troops were already on the ground, making intervention just a matter of crossing the street. But the firm and patriotic position of Panama's government and the Panama Defense Forces have thus a far thwarted the danger of U.S. intervention. For a U.S. invasion of Panama would not be comparable to the intervention of Grenada; in Panama the government and the defense forces are united around the decision to defend the country's independence. In addition, the Reagan administration was opposed domestically by those who pragmatically believed that Panama is not an enemy and that intervening in Panama would constitute a U.S. government adventure that could initiate a war at a sensitive geopolitical point.

The question must be asked, Don't empires always invade, carry out aggression, and endeavour to dominate other countries? The United States has not implemented—indeed, it has never attempted—a policy of coexistence

to be left behind and displays a lack of realism when it tries to impose its developed capitalist system worldwide, and in particular on El Salvador, a country of more than 5 million people that occupies just 8,260 square miles and lacks oil and other natural resources except for its land and people. Obviously the country requires a different economic system that can place greater emphasis on meeting social needs. Otherwise it will not survive. It will enter into a never-ending war over land and bread.

To be sure, developed capitalism in the Western world has worked. Its development, strength, and efficiency in innumerable areas cannot be denied. But that success has been based on colonialism in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The history of slavery and exploitation cannot be repeated. If the United States understood this point, not doubt with less treasure than the \$3 billion it has sent to wage war in Central America, it could have done more for the region's people and avoided the

tension of having a major conflict in its area of influence. The idea that U.S. national security is threatened in El Salvador is mistaken and is motivated by an outdated ideological world view. The Reagan administration overestimated the importance of El Salvador and became caught in the morass of a senseless war. The world in which the Salvadoran revolution is unfolding is not the world of the 1960s, when the Vietnam War was fought. Today geopolitics is multipolar. There are more open spaces for other powers, which obviously affects not only the character of the revolutionary process but also the conduct of the imperial powers. It is impossible to reduce today's world to capitalism versus socialism. Today's is a more complex world of technological and commercial confrontation, with new poles of power like Japan and Western Europe; of developed socialism with *perestroika* (restructuring); of a modernizing socialist China trying to open its own geopolitical space; of strengthened social democratic governments; of an emerging sense of Latin Americanism; and of a united Third World struggling for its own interests and drawing on the multiple ideological streams that flow from the different realities of each continent.

### **An Education in Pluralism**

In such a world it is absurd and antihistorical to adopt a closed model of revolution. Such an approach blocks the development of revolution and leads to its isolation. This multipolarity greatly benefits revolutionary change; however, it leaves room to try different revolutionary models and to take into account different interests and capabilities. Many political, economic, and ideological influences come into play. Revolutionary movements do not have to subject themselves to any predetermined scheme nor succumb to the pressure of a war.

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Contd. from page 18

In these new circumstances, revolutionary movements are determined to maintain peace and achieve development as quickly as possible. Also under the new circumstances, movements are permitted to become more flexible and open. We do not view this evolution as a concession but rather as a purer expression of the democratic nature of revolutionary changes. For revolutions are essentially democratic. They can and should be defended not only by a solid correlation of forces but also by a flexible democratic program representative of broad sectors, tendencies, and realities, both internal and external. The aim is to create real democracy for the entire people in the economic and political arenas.

has resulted from the history of Latin America and from the nature of its societies, which differ from those in which the first classic revolution unfolded. Although events in Eastern and Western Europe have affected the entire world, reality in the Third World is entirely different from that in Europe. It would be politically absurd to link the Soviet Union to all emerging revolutions by some form of ideological umbilical cord.

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are solved. Only through social change can outbreaks resulting from hunger be ended.

The Salvadoran revolutionary movement, based on the FMLN's alliance with the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR), includes within its ranks Social Christians, Social Democrats, and Marxists. These alliances reflect El Salvador's special situation and history. It cannot be concluded that simply because the FMLN is an armed organization it imposes its positions on the others. Rather, the overall correlation of forces within the movement results from the nature of the alliance, not just from the FMLN's actions. This point will become even clearer when the moment arrives for the revolutionary movement to begin defining positions, making decisions, and building a platform through a broad political debate.

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Without attempting to delve into the issue of *perestroika* and the complexity it poses in the socialist world, it should be noted that this movement is also a result of a new international correlation of forces. Today socialism no longer runs the risk of being overturned by invasion or eliminated by a nuclear war.

No longer threatened as before, socialism is seeking to renew and improve itself. Debate among tendencies within socialism, on both the right and the left wings, will take place. A stand on these debates must be taken. But the debate itself is a positive step to emerge from an earlier paralysis. Reform involves a complex struggle in which both advances and setbacks may be required to move forward.

Today the new thinking taking place inside the revolutionary movements in Latin America is also the result of particular conditions. A new revolutionary thinking

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It is equally absurd to regard the Salvadoran conflict as part of the East-West conflict and therefore to hope to resolve it through a U.S. Soviet accord. Revolutions do not wait; they are an inevitable social process. In the case of El Salvador, the level of crisis affect-

The alliance has been an education in pluralism for the forces that constitute it. The various factions have been able to maintain their unity because of the need to carry out a profound transformation of Salvadoran society. Regardless of the decisive role the FMLN may play the leading edge of revolutionary change cannot be limited dogmatically to it. Social democracy's capacity to influence events in Latin America reflects a historical trend and can work for a balance of power in which social democ-

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ing the system points to an outbreak as a result of the strength accumulated by the revolutionary movements; and no one can stop it. The only valid negotiation process concerning El Salvador is that which occurs among Salvadorans. A relaxation of tensions in Central America will be possible only if the region's structural problems

racy arises as a new pole in the international correlation of forces. Indeed, it already plays an effective and positive role in the development of new revolutions, and its participation tends to discourage extreme radicalization. The FMLN already has established an important historical and strategic relationship with social democracy

by means of the FDR-FMLN alliance. Nevertheless, the Latin American and Salvadoran reality does not allow a mechanical application of the European social democratic model of developed capitalism. We do not intend to present the Salvadoran revolution as a social democratic revolution; that, in addition to being false, would be schematic.

Realities in the Third World permit high levels of political convergence in order to carry out the necessary transformations of its societies. On our continent, Latin Americanism has acquired enormous strength since the Sandinista revolution. Even when there is no united front on the foreign debt problem, there is full awareness among broad sectors of society in most Latin American countries of the need to achieve self-determination and reduce the U.S. ability to impose its imperial will on the continent in order to achieve some degree of development and to rescue Latin America from great social upheavals.

The Contadora peace effort and its extension, the Esquipulas II accord, are clear expressions of the Latin American desire for self-determination. It is a contradiction that Latin America, with more poverty and problems, appears more disposed to coexistence than the United States itself.

For the FMLN, the basis for a solution among Salvadorans is essentially contained in the Central American and Latin American solutions expressed by Esquipulas and Contadora. The problem to be resolved is the interference of the United States. Everything else is open to discussion.

Latin America's independence is the fundamental issue for all governments and political forces within Latin America. Without independence there can be no development; without development there will be upheavals and wars. Most

of the political forces understand that social upheaval is not ideologically motivated, and "Soviet-Cuban interference" does not provoke this disorder. Rather, U.S. stubbornness is responsible for the instability because the U.S. government refuses to change the terms of its relations with Latin America. Instead it persists in its imperialist approach. The idea that revolution will be exported to others is also absolutely false.

Latin Americanism creates a force of tremendous geopolitical importance that can affect the course of a revolution within a country like El Salvador. As with the influence of European social democracy, the influence of Latin Americanism is in no way negative. Rather, it enables the revolutionary movement to avoid isolation and to unite the desire for independence and self-determination with the need for social change.

*In today's world, a combination of the private and public sectors can lead to more rapid development of Salvadoran society than a supposedly more radical and closed model. The private sector must be part of the system but not the only actor capable of directing the system. Our objective is development. An ideological approach is of no use if it does not resolve the problems of poverty.*

Indeed, a more independent Central America will have a very positive impact on the correlation of forces throughout the continent, not only politically but, over the longer run, economically as well. Stability within the region will convert the region into an important market for many Latin American countries and even for the United States, if it is able to alter its position. Conversely, if the United States succeeds in imposing its will in Central America and forcibly suppresses the revolutionary effort, the self-determination and independence that Latin America needs will suffer. The revolutionary fire will be extinguished; but soon another, much greater, will break out throughout Latin America.

In El Salvador, the middle class is an important part of society. Its importance derives not so much

from its size, which is nevertheless relatively large for Central America, but from its qualitative contribution to Salvadoran society. To date the oligarchy has not accorded this middle class sufficient space or power but has sought to use it by frightening its members with the fear of revolutionary change.

The oligarchy's fundamental base of support has always been the army, which it has found easier to rally to its interests than the well-educated middle class. For this reason the oligarchy has always rejected the Christian Democratic party. It accepted the party's participation in the political direction of the country only to save itself after the Christian Democrats received U.S. sponsorship. But under the circumstances the Christian Democrats had to enter office without real power, aware nonetheless of the role they were playing as savior of the oligarchic system.

With reform blocked, and faced with the oligarchy's retrograde thinking, broad sectors of society had to be put of social change. Their importance is yet another reason why the FMLN's alliances are necessarily a strategic component of its approach. That policy is acquiring a greater maturity over time and explains the basis for the FDR-FMLN alliance.

### The U.S. Salvadoran Relationship

In brief, the forces leading the campaign for change in El Salvador are not limited to the classic categories of workers and peasants. The revolutionary movement reaches to other sectors of society, including the middle class. Agreements among the various forces involved in the effort will determine the specifics of the new political order.

In this regard, the changes sought must have a realistic economic foundation. Agrarian reform is key since land is the fundamental factor in the economy and the fundamental source of social conflict. So long as El Salvador's agrarian structure is not profoundly transformed, war will go on for many years, not because some leader orders conflict, but for a simple social reason: Too many Salvadorans live in a very small area.

The land-tenure system is the heart of the oligarchy's power. It must change. There can be greater flexibility with regard to other structural changes, which in any event will flow from changes in the agrarian sector. Obviously a reform of the land-tenure system will not eliminate the private sector; on the contrary, it will modernize it and offer it new opportunities for development. But land reform will oblige the private sector to understand that there must be a reorganization of Salvadoran society and that within the society it must accept a new role.

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The private sector should operate in a new structural context: In today's world, a combination of the private and public sectors can lead to more rapid development of Salvadoran society than a supposedly more radical and closed model. The private sector must be part of the system but not the only actor capable of directing the system. Our objective is development. An ideological approach is of no use if it does not resolve the problems of poverty. But El Salvador cannot develop if the United States does not understand its situation and drives it to develop a war economy.

In the new system there should be room for domestic political competition, with democratic elec-

tions and political parties—thus permitting the masses to participate in decision making and in the political, economic, and social management of the country. Participation forces the masses to defend by means of debate and daily involvement their newly acquired gains. This should make it possible to maintain equilibrium in the political participation of those social forces advocating change. Their partici-

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pation also has the advantage of guaranteeing the political defense of the revolution. For political democracy to be meaningful, however, there must also be economic democracy. People must eat, become educated, and have access to health care, as well as elect their representatives and make decisions about the country's future.

Democracy must be forged from above and from below. It is not enough to vote once every 5 years; nor are parliaments enough.

Democracy must be based on the popular will. It must be supported by all political forces that are linked to the masses. The purpose of political parties is not only to compete in elections but to help lead and educate the people in the daily exercise of power. Participatory democracy permits self-management of the masses; electoral democracy confers legitimacy on the revolution, reaffirms its mass support, and allows the balanced participation of all sectors in exercising power.

A one-party system—given the make-up of Salvadoran society—does not correspond to Salvadoran reality; nor should the unity of the revolutionary forces in a single party be confused with a

one-party society. Indeed, it is not even possible to apply mechanically the theory of a classic revolutionary party to our revolution. In El Salvador, the leading forces of social change are broader and cannot be limited to models adapted during the Bolshevik revolution. The participation of the middle class, Christians, women, and others bestows on Salvadoran socialism a character quite diffe-

rent from the classic model of East European socialism. There is a need for more flexibility, consistent with a multiparty society, among the revolutionary forces themselves.

Elections are part of the FMLN's program. FMLN rejection of the current and past electoral processes is a position of opposition to elections under a dictatorship and in a country dominated by the United States. I wonder how many Americans would vote and how many would rebuff elections if their country were subjected to a foreign power. The FMLN does not fear elections. Under fair conditions the majority of Salvadorans would opt for revolutionary change.

On January 24, 1989, the FMLN publicly proposed the postponement for 6 months of the presidential elections scheduled for March 19. This historic proposal was aimed at opening a new way for a political solution and could be the prompt for a process of negotiations. Under the FMLN proposal, the Salvadoran government would take measures to guarantee conditions that would allow the people to freely express their will. The U.S. government would not attempt to affect the electoral process. The FMLN, for its part, would ask its supporters to participate in the elections by voting for the platform and candidates of the Democratic Convergence, which includes two of the parties in the

FDR. It would also make a commitment to respect the electoral process and its outcome.

With this proposal the FMLN is making a final effort to prevent a social explosion. The FMLN is offering to remove one of the main obstacles cited by the government and the United States as an excuse to avoid a real political solution. The basis for this is the conviction that the democratic and revolutionary alliance enjoys the support of the majority of the Salvadoran people. It also reflects the FMLN's responsibility to make an effort to avoid the bloodshed that a continuation of the war would mean.

Freedom of expression is also required if equilibrium is to be achieved among domestic social forces. Through debate and education, the masses can learn why they should defend their historic achievement, the revolution itself. But this knowledge cannot be developed without opposition, without an understanding by the masses of the opposition's point of view. Debate pushes the revolutionary forces to develop and deepen the revolutionary position and to shelter it from ideological dogmatism. To promote debate, professional journalism that is both independent and critical is fundamental; at the same time, without undermining freedom of expression there should be a break in the oligarchy's control of the media.

Just as the revolution must promote the development of El Salvador with the country's own resources, so it must base its own defense on the same principle. It is neither necessary nor realistic to arm ourselves excessively. Defense should be based on the people. Becoming unconquerable through the resistance of a whole people suffices to provide acceptable margins of security. There is no need for large and overarmed military forces. In this regard, the revolution need represent no

danger to the United States. The procurement of large and sophisticated armaments would only provide the United States with an excuse to intervene. Nevertheless, defense requirements reflect real or potential threats; aggression from outside can create new requirements.

In short, the Salvadoran revolution is conditioned by the geopolitical realities of Latin America and the United States. This fact implies, on the one hand, a struggle to change the terms of El Salvador's relations with the United States and, on the other hand, a need to maintain relations with the United States. The United States must reject a policy of empire, but El Salvador must accept and understand the status of the United States as a powerful country in the Western Hemisphere. A

*The goal is to solve El Salvador's social problems. We aim to lead our people to a more advanced stage of development. We have no desire to reform society according to a fixed plan simply for the sake of carrying out our plan.*

revolutionary government should avoid confrontation with the United States. It is our most important neighbour. We remain linked to it by economic, cultural, and political ties stronger than those we maintain with countries in other parts of the world.

There is a belief—held primarily by key sectors of U.S. society—that revolutionary change implies a shift even in a country's cultural values, and that participants in a Latin American revolution will soon embrace the values of East European socialism. But Salvadorans are a tropical people who have lived under the cultural influence of the United States. Our culture is a hybrid embracing the values of indigenous people, black and Spanish settlers, and the Anglo-Saxons living to the north. Almost 1 million Salvadorans live in the United States. For historical reasons, we identify culturally with Latin America and the United States; we have few cultural ties with

Europe, except for Spain, and even fewer with Eastern Europe. Our climate, our traditions, and our geographic placement create these realities. Nobody can renounce them; for our people accept, understand, and like them.

Christianity is a case in point: The rise of the Salvadoran revolutionary movement coincides historically with the Roman Catholic church's turn toward a greater commitment to social justice. The most important universal figure in our history, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was assassinated in 1980, has become the principal martyr in the cause of the poor. In him the values of faith, humility, and love were joined with the revolutionary spirit of the Salvadoran people.

The young men and women now in the revolutionary movement

have grown up under the influence of rock music, Hollywood, salsa music, Mexican romanticism, and Christianity. The process of cultural fusion between Latin America and the United States is part of universal culture. Such influences cannot and should not be subjected to ideological restrictions. Such dogmatism would not represent the true sentiment of our people.

Are all of these positions just tactical maneuvers by the FMLN? Conversely, do they indicate that the FMLN is ready to abandon revolutionary aims? The answer is that, whatever the process might be called, El Salvador needs profound change; and what the FMLN proposes, others would call a revolution. In asserting that, the FMLN does not advance a dogmatic view of what it means by revolution or socialism. The goal is to solve El Salvador's social problems. We aim to lead our people to a more advanced stage of development. We have no desire

to reform society according to a fixed plan simply for the sake of carrying out our plan. We seek radical change in the agrarian sector and a true pluralistic democracy. A new correlation of forces in society will guarantee their survival. Central is the need to respond to the specific historical realities of our country, which requires the democratic participation of the masses and all forces of society.

In El Salvador it is neither possible nor necessary to carry out a plan to eliminate totally the private sector, to establish a single-party system, to bar other parties from the media, to break with the church, to eliminate elections, to enter into military pacts with foreign powers, to allow foreign militaries on Salvadoran soil, or, most ridiculous, to allow nuclear weapons on Salvadoran territory.

The FMLN pursues an El Salvador that is open, flexible, pluralistic, and democratic in both the economic and the political spheres. This pluralistic democracy for El Salvador is now possible because of a change in the military correlation of forces. The forces now controlling El Salvador, in their

effort to survive, have been unable to modernize the system; they have also been unable to professionalize the army, which continues its repression and remains politically obedient to the oligarchy and the United States. Indeed, democratization will require a change in the balance of military power in the country. Change does not necessarily mean destruction of the army. Its future will depend on whether there is a negotiated solution to the war or a revolutionary victory. The army is the fundamental power in Salvadoran society. So long as the military balance does not change, social change will be blocked because the army will always act to reconstitute its power. For this reason it is absurd to suggest that the FMLN lay down its arms. For the FMLN is sufficiently powerful that the army cannot defeat it militarily. El Salvador needs a revolutionary change to establish a democratic and pluralistic society; that change needs to be guaranteed by military power. The best solution, therefore, is a reconstitution of the military component in society that will neither destroy the army nor disarm the FMLN.

Ultimately it is not a question of sharing or not sharing power.

but of forging a true democracy in El Salvador. The United States wants the FMLN to accept as democratic a government totally subject to its will, with real power in the hands of the army, and with the landowning oligarchy holding economic power. The U.S. aversion to revolutionary change in El Salvador misjudges the nature of such change, even if it were to result from a military victory by the FMLN and much more so if it were to result from a process of negotiation. If El Salvador finally embarked on needed reform, it could help to stabilize the region and the continent. If the United States understood and accepted this, it would contribute to an equilibrium that could avoid new wars in Latin America.

For the FMLN these pragmatic ideas offer a basis for a political convergence among different parties in my country. But they do not obviate the need for a negotiated solution. The way events have evolved confirms that the current arrangements governing military, economic, and political power in El Salvador cannot continue unaltered. To try to prevent change is to promote the continuation of the war. ■

-*Courtesy YForeign Policy Magazine*

circumstances in South Asia. The cases are broadly divided into those which are more concrete development initiatives at the micro-level with new processes of accumulation and measurable material benefits and those which are peoples movements, starting with protest and now reflecting multiple objective and values. All the case studies illustrate the building of new kinds of peoples organisations either to reverse past processes or for re-inforcing, sustaining and multiplying new processes.

Fundamental to this new methodology is the epistemological proposition that the development of development theory and practice itself occurs in a dialectic relationship with each other and at each stage the lessons of practice will form the basis for further theory, just as a deeper theory will then feed back into deeper practice. For this reason the formulation of the alternative theory must be rudimentary. However, specific elements of the process in place can be clearly identified, and inform a variety of micro-level actions. As actions are taken through praxis, more explicit theorising can follow. The nature of the alternative theory is that it develops not through a priori formulations, but through the comprehension of its application to practice at each stage of praxis.<sup>6</sup>

Thus the rudimentary state of the alternative theory should not be taken to be a reflection of the rudimentary state of understanding of either the South Asian reality or the alternative process which is emerging and cannot be stopped.

1. G. V. S. de Silva, Wahidul Haque, Niranjan Mehta, Md Anisur Rahman and Ponna Wignaraja Towards a Theory of Rural Development, Progressive Publishers, Lahore, Pakistan, 1988.
2. Ponna Wignaraja and Akmal Hussain (eds.) The challenge in South Asia: Development, Democracy and Regional Cooperation, Sage Publications, New Delhi, Newbury Park and London, 1989.
3. Ponna Wignaraja, Women, Poverty and Resources, Sage Publications, New Delhi, Newbury Park and London, 1989.
4. Ponna Wignaraja, Akmal Hussain, Harsh Sethi and Ganeshan Wignaraja, Participatory Development: Learning from South Asia, Oxford University Press, Karachi and Oxford (forthcoming 1990).
5. G. V. S. De Silva, W. Haque, N. Mehta, A. Rahman and Ponna Wignaraja, Towards a Theory of Rural Development, Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1988.
6. In an editorial introduction to a recent paper by one of the South Asian Scholars associated with the UNU network, it has been stated that the conceptual relationship between theory and practice (for those interested in the issues of Praxis) is as follows:  
"For those interested in issues of praxis, the relationship between theory building and action remains a constant preoccupation. Not just whether the 'thinkers' and the 'action' will or can be the same, but whether theory building as an exercise is imbued with sterility in an action sense. This critique is fairly easily made about theoretical work of a neo-classical or functionalist type. Here the assumption of equilibrium, ensured either via nature or the market leads to status-quo. Even critical theory which is centrally concerned with the issue of change, and revolutionary change at that, when caught within the moors of a pre-facto working out of the implications of intervention, often ends up relying on the 'laws of motion of society.' To demand that each small action should be justifiable within a perspective of 'overall structural change' is only to foredoom the actor to inaction.  
Most theoreticians would undeniably be very unhappy with such a characterization of their activity, but the great desire to elevate all that they do to a level of science, does put pressure of being satisfied to the last degree. There is of course a danger that the critique of the 'art of theorising' may further dampen the already muted theoretical activity in the South Asian region. But being clear about our presuppositions can only be a help." Editorial comment on R. Sudarshan, "Theory, Ideology and Action in Economics and Law", Loyakan Bulletin, 6.6, New Delhi, 1988.

Contd. from page 4

the culture that must inform the whole process. The other is the role of the initiator/animator without whom the process cannot multiply and go to scale during a foreseeable time horizon.

The discussion of the knowledge system starts at a philosophical level where the dominant paradigm of positivist knowledge influenced development action and legitimised one type of social action and delegitimised another. The corollary of this was the premise of "one stock of knowledge" and its operational tool for economic development - the transfer of technology from industrialised to poor countries which was considered as an indispensable element in the process. Even this transfer was conceived in a Cartesian fragmented mould and was an insufficient knowledge base for response to the complex of problems it was supposed to address.

Praxis and PAR were located outside this knowledge system. Therefore, it was necessary to demystify, both the nature of this knowledge and the premises and method of this knowledge transfer, before proceeding to the concept of cognitive knowledge and to the many stocks of knowledge and technology that can be drawn on for praxis, PAR and sustainable development. The discussion then goes on to elaborate on the relationship between knowledge, action and power on which PAR is premised. This then helps to bridge the gap between real knowledge and wisdom; and development action and social change. Praxis and PAR have to be premised on the wider alternative knowledge system that is also available, where the knowledge system provides the power to bring about a change in the condition of the knower and generates the new social process. In introducing the concept of the peoples knowledge system, the study also

highlights the availability of greater technological choice for the poor.

The second issue discussed relates to the role of the animator. In order to enable the people to bring out their creativity, with a spirit of self-reliance and self-involvement and assert their right to participate in development as subjects in the process, an appropriate stimulation is required. Sometimes an independence struggle or a violent protest movement against oppression, exploitation and repression can spontaneously conscientise and help organise a people as happened in India in 1947 or Bangladesh in 1971. But the discussion here is how this creativity can be released under less dramatic conditions and the prevailing socio-political circumstances in South Asia. The creative spirit exists in all human beings and does not always manifest itself spontaneously. The challenge is to bring out this quality and the strength and the dignity of the people that goes with it. This section of the study articulates the perspective and generalises on the experiences of the harder processes of mobilisation, conscientisation and organisation now in evidence in South Asia. These are the seeds of change as opposed to the "bubbles", which are softer processes. It shows how an animator can initiate and catalyse this harder process. It also deals with dialogue as a mode of promoting participation, the training of animators through the participatory methodology and identifies steps for initiating PAR. Finally, the question of the progressive redundancy of the external animator, as the sustainable and self-reliant process gets underway is analysed.

In the final part of the study, several further illustrative cases studies are presented which show the process at work under different socio-political cir-